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PASSION



By
G. VERE TYLER

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PASSION

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G VERE TYLER

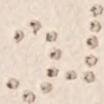


CHICAGO
CHARLES H SERGEL & CO

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PASSION

CHAPTER I

"For I am sick of love."

"Nanette, I believe I will sing in a choir."

Nanette was seated in a low chair, leisurely counting and recounting the diamonds and turquoises that alternated in her tiny bracelet. She raised her waxen lids languidly.

"I would, dear, you have tried everything else. It would be so charming to fall in love with the tenor, and then find out that he was a bartender. It would divert you so."

"I am in earnest, Nanette."

"You are always in earnest, Celeste; it is very unfortunate." Celeste leaned back in her chair, clasped her hands behind her head, and closed

her eyes. She suggested restful devotional thoughts, and was beautiful and vague, like a cloud taking shape and luminosity in the evening hours. Her eyes were the color of strong coffee held in amber, and ever in their depth was melancholy inquiry. Her lashes were tipped with gold. On her complexion was a yellow radiance as though eternal.

Sunrise shone upon her. It scorched her hair, and in revenge the silken meshes held the beams to make a light crown for her brow. Her hands were strong and white and restless. She used them constantly while talking, and each gesture expressed an emotion. The gown she wore was of pale grey. It clung to her willowy form, hiding yet revealing it. About her waist was a yellow girdle, with tassels of silk, and round her throat and wrists were opal stones caught with topaz.

After some moments she opened her eyes, unclasped her hands, and leaned forward with her chin extended.

“I think it would be a joy divine,” she spoke, following her own thoughts, “to feel one’s voice rise higher and higher in praise, until it seemed to penetrate the very gates of heaven, and arrest the attention of the angels. One’s body on earth, all that one’s soul could give in heaven. I know I could sing as I have never

sung, I believe I could make people fall down on their knees and sob and pray."

She was speaking excitedly, but suddenly dropped her voice and sighed.

"After all," she continued, "I care for so little besides my music." Nanette shrugged her shoulders.

"I hardly think the scenes you suggest would be of any advantage to the church; on the other hand, rather disturbing, my darling, and then you would grow tired of the work."

"I would not, Nanette," the color mounting to her brow for a second, "you do not understand; you do not know me—no one does. I would like the work—at least, I think I would. The lives of women sicken me with their undefined conception of existence, and I am ever wondering that they seem so content to be drifting aimlessly, thoughtlessly, satisfied with the froth of life, which is but the effete discarded matter of the limpid pool wherein the pearls are contained. Yet I believe I wonder more at the few who plunge in with a purpose and strive to develop it unto an end. Ah! Nanette," she cried, raising her voice as her earnestness increased, "the people to envy in this world are the people who dare, and having dared, strive. Above all things, a purpose! I envy Sadie Hall, the former waiter girl of the café, who gave up

waiting and opened a little place for herself, and I go there and drink her coffee, and order great plates of bon-bons, because she was so brave, poor little thing, and always had such a startled look in her face, as if she feared she would fail. Of course there are eyes even in her little world, jealously watching. There are always people about every one, whose criticism you shrink from in any undertaking, and whose pictured smiles over your struggles are agony to you."

"You will not be worried with these thoughts, when you have supplied Hugh's place," Nanette remarked. "These moments of unconscious selection of a hero, are very hard on you, I grant, but they always turn out brilliantly."

"Oh! try to sympathize with me, Nanette, I am sick of love and tired of men. Why should there be such fierce struggling within me for expression if there be really nothing to express?"

"You are very imaginative, my beautiful sister, and may I say it? vain! You desire recognition."

"Perhaps you are right," Celeste answered, drearily, "and maybe, after all, only in my element laughing and singing, or drinking wine possibly. I confess I do not know whether vanity or ambition controls me, or even the exact difference in the meaning of the words."

The two women changed their positions and

expressions. It was their reception day, and the first carriage had rolled up to the door. Nanette was quick and agile in her movements. Celeste fell into positions. Her mind and soul were filled with music. She was dreamy like her thoughts. The rooms were luxurious, opening three deep, the first two in modern style, with tasselled floors, and rugs and draperies in faded tints. The third was an extended hall, with pillars of soft grey marble. It was entirely without furniture except the grand piano, a few chairs and lounges, in scarlet plush, and a harp that rested against a statue of St. Cecelia.

The piano was situated directly in front of a concave wall that faced the other rooms; on either side were cathedral windows in strange crepuscule designs. In the center of one, as though through rifted clouds, the face of Mozart in its serene beauty, shown forth. In the other, Wagner was enveloped in smoke with his arms out-stretched to the flash of a cannon.

To-day the lamps were shaded with rose coverings. Bowls and bunches of La France roses, mixed with pale green foliage, filled every vacant space.

Celeste picked up one loose bunch by her side, tied with mauve streamers like her gown, as the door opened.

CHAPTER II

"He standeth behind our wall."

In a few moments the rooms commenced to fill.

After some pleasant greetings, and disconnected conversation, Nanette went over to the small table in the corner, and began to pour the chocolate. The steam from each tiny cup played about her in pretty snake-like curves, and vanished above her head. The odor was delicious, coming through the roses.

The servants entered phantom-like, and handed the wine, moving gracefully in and out among the guests, like dark shadows bearing liquid crystal.

In the music hall an Italian boy was playing soft melodies, with variations, on a harp.

"What do you think?" Nanette cried, raising her voice, while she passed a tulip cup to a lady in

violet velvet, "Celeste is going to sing in a choir!"

She threw back her head, and broke into a childish laugh. Celeste frowned. Nanette carried her joking too far. She was in earnest about this, and did not wish it discussed.

"Well, for my part I think it is just what she ought to do!" one beauty whispered, who was herself thinking of going on the stage. "I never hear anyone sing like her, and all these prejudices about publicity, I am thankful to say, are dying out; and, really, if a woman has talent, she ought to develop it, and give the world the benefit."

"That is true," the young man to whom she had addressed herself replied; "one-third of the genius of the world dies of laziness, another for the sake of conventionality, and the third that lives, has to be divided among so many, that most of the time one has to put up with trash or nothing. It is a great bore."

"Sing in a choir!" bawled out old Colonel Benson, laughing until he put his hands to his side, "sing in a choir! well that is good. Why they will be asking five dollars admission fee to go to church, and the sidewalks will be so thronged that there will have to be an extra police force engaged to keep order. All the old sinners in town will turn out, even I will go—my dear madame—even I will go."

“That at any rate will be a good thing,” some one said.

“I suggested,” said Nanette, laughing again, “that she should have two yellow-haired children in white robes, with golden wings, elevated on each side of her, to turn the music, and should wear a grey cloth gown minus drapery, with a diamond cross burning on her bosom!”

Everyone laughed at this.

“Nanette,” Celeste said, quietly, “you are not kind.”

“She will scold me dreadfully,” Nanette whispered, pretending to look frightened.

“Well, well, since you are in earnest, my dear lady,” the old colonel put in, “I know the very man for you. The typical story-book organist with bushy hair, and soiled linen, who lives in an attic, eats plain fare, and hates women. They say, however, the very spirits of the immortals are embedded in him, that he possesses the soul of Beethoven, the heart of Mendelssohn, the ferocity of Wagner and the sweetness of Schubert; just fills the bill for every mood.”

“Oh! tell me,” Celeste cried, leaning over to him, “is it really true? All whom I have known fall short of expectation. The expression of music invariably disappoints me, I long for some one who can sound the dreams within me.”

“For my part, most beautiful songstress,”

answering her at last seriously, "I know nothing of music, but those who do, say that he is sublime. In fact I have heard him called the genius of this century. But I don't believe you could really meet him. He is a miserable, dirty crank, who isolates himself. One funny thing about him is that he will not permit his compositions to be published until after his death."

"He may be afraid," Nanette chimed in.

The colonel continued, smiling at her a moment; "And only a chosen few ever hear him play, except in church, where he declares he arranges his service to give a note for every penny he receives!"

"What a strange creature! You really interest me."

Just here more visitors entered and the conversation turned on other topics.

The boy in the music hall was playing to his sweetheart in a foreign country, the warmth had brought out the sweetness of the flowers, the lamps brightened as they burned, and a delicate blush was over everything.

Twilight pressed hard against the windows.

Mozart's face was lost in the clouds, and only the flash of the cannon could be discerned on the other.

The wine was passed freely. Conversation was general, senseless, and pitched in high keys.

Celeste was not talkative, letting her guests entertain themselves. The atmosphere was close. She shut her eyes. It was getting very tiresome. She wished they would all go, which in fact they soon began to do. The raising and falling of the portiers, the bowing of the servants, the closing of carriage doors was incessant. Finally the rooms became quite deserted.

The colonel's son in bidding adieu to Celeste bowed low over her hand. "I hope my father's words did not offend you," he said. "He cannot resist his jokes."

"Why certainly not, it is only intentional unkindness that wounds. They do not understand, that is all," she replied, smiling sadly. "You are so far above them," the young man murmured, then turning quietly left the room.

Celeste followed him with her eyes. There was always such melancholy about this boy it made one's heart ache.

CHAPTER III

"Go thy way forth."

The music had ceased and the dark-eyed boy was gone. Celeste had thrown her flowers aside, and was leaning against the mantel with one elbow resting on it, peering into the fire. There was utter weariness in her perfect face. Before her was a man whose passionate gaze disturbed her.

"May I stay a while, Celeste?" he asked.

"A little while, yes," she answered without expression in her voice, and still gazing at the fire. "But not for long, I go to hear 'Tristrem and Ysolde' this evening, and wish to run over parts of the score, besides," raising her eyes at last, "I am tired."

"How is it that you never have any time for me now, Celeste, and are always tired? It is three weeks since I saw you alone. I suppose you know how often I have called."

"Yes, Nanette said she thought she would

collect your cards, and send them back to you; it would save you the trouble of getting any more for the present."

The man flushed slightly, and his brows contracted.

"You have been indifferent to me," he answered, "and have avoided seeing me. I did not think you could be cruel, or that you would hear me ridiculed."

"Nor did I," she cried, stretching out her hands to him, "try to forgive me, I have behaved abominably to you, but, Hugh, it is not my fault. If I could I would bring back those hours we knew in the fall. I believe I was happier even than you. I know I was supremely so, but I am dead to it all now."

There was a hopeless wail in her voice as she continued. "I command my heart to respond to yours, but its beats never change. I tell my cheeks to burn as they used to, when I hear that you are here, but they remain cool and white. I tell my limbs to carry me to you swiftly, but they seem heavy and tired—Ah! Hugh, why should we not face the truth bravely? My love is dead—I do not know why or how, but that it is! It is only the corpse of it that I can offer you, if you want that, dear" with a dreary smile, "take it. Here are my hands, here are my lips, my arms to put about your neck, but they are lifeless!"

She leaned on the mantel, and hid her face. The loose sleeve fell back and revealed one perfect arm, with its tea-rose texture to the shoulder, the opal stones, with their topaz clasp, glittered on the back of her neck, the golden hair gleamed above them, in a tangled knot, and recalled to him the subtle perfume it contained.

He remembered how once in answer to his prayer, she had taken it down and wrapped their faces in it, while he kissed her.

The perfect curves of her willowy form clearly defined in its colorless drapery, appealed to him. He knew there was honor in her, that would make her attempt, at any rate, to keep her word, and the temptation was strong to take her in his arms and revel in the ecstasy that even her passionless frame contained, but he also knew, that in her present mood his caresses would writhe her like a grater passed over her flesh, that his kisses would make the nerves of her mouth contract and quiver in agony.

For a few moments there was silence between them. A log in the grate burnt in two and brightened into a blaze.

She raised her head slowly, and looked into his eyes.

"I will not take you thus, Celeste," he said, "It would be like stealing jewels from the dead, simply because they did not resist. But I will

kiss you once, even as we kiss the dead, and leave you, and never again will I return, until your spirit awakes and you shall recall me."

He took her in his arms, and pushing the hair back from her forehead looked long and lingeringly in her face.

The waxen skin colored under his gaze, she tried to speak, but he pressed his lips suddenly to hers, and left her.

When he was gone, she wiped his tears from her cheeks.

CHAPTER IV

“I sought him, but I found him not.”

“I pursue them,” Celeste thought, “I give them no chance of escape—I am wild and breathless in the chase. I strike straight for the heart, and when they are vanquished, I will not even let them lie at my feet. It is almost brutal!”

She covered her face with her hands for a moment, then slipped down on the floor in front of an arm-chair, and laid her head on the cushion. “I was not always thus, till he murdered my heart, and left me this soulless thing—a slave to my senses. Constant to nothing.” She was recalling her husband who brought her to the city when she would have preferred to go with him to a forest, neglected her, left her to her own devices, laughed at her sentimentality which was the divinity of her heart; taught her that the refinement of love might be its offense, lived a life of reckless dissipation, and finally died sud-

denly of pneumonia, contracted during a hunting trip.

She never recovered from the shock, and even now after five years, she spent many hours by his grave, sometimes with outstretched arms over the mound, her lips pressed to the cold damp grass, that crept into her ears and nostrils, and recalled the shivering chill that had gone through her when she had laid her lips on that frigid clammy face lying in the coffin.

All the love words by which she used to call him would struggle in her throat, but the audible sounds were moans and low smothered cries. The cruel selfishness of his life was forgotten, she remembered only her love.

She had pictured to herself day by day, week by week, the changes going on.

She had seen his eyes dry up, and sink in, she saw the hollows in the temples, the protruding cheek bones, the lips receding in the horrible grin that was forming around the mouth. She witnessed the flesh shrinking, and the rib bones rising into a latticed curve, in the concavity of which she could see her own heart throbbing and pulsating, alive and buried in his carcass. Sometimes Nanette feared she would lose her mind, and then the girl was very tender with her.

Many love affairs had come into her life, stirring her senses, and intoxicating for the moment,

but the miserable knowledge that no feeling with her was ever real, made her restless, seeking this thing and that, in which to absorb herself, and becoming absorbed in nothing.

She raised her head from the cushion, and shivering, drew her shoulders up, and commenced rubbing her hands one over the other. Her melancholy eyes were full of pain, and the brows were drawn together in acute lines of suffering.

“If ever a woman laughed or sang,” she cried aloud, “with the madness of gravity, I am that woman. Oh! to feel once more as I used to! To stand in the night and look at the stars, without the tears rising to my eyes. To sing with a glad heart, and not a reckless one. To smile because I feel peace in my soul. To kiss and not wake ashamed of the kiss—but oh! I cannot—I cannot. I try—I try with all my strength. I seek excitement, but everything fails, and I recognize that I am a monstrosity—a body without a soul—a being in whom the heart is absent and the senses alive! A miserable thing that can feel—yet be only a momentary slave to feeling!”

She lifted herself upon her knees and raised up her arms.

“Celeste,” said Nanette, stealing softly in and kneeling down by her, “you promised me you would not give way to these paroxysms of grief.

Don't you know how depressed they leave you?"

"Yes."

"Then why do you? It's weakness, dear."

"Because, Nanette," clasping the girl, and sobbing against her, "I cannot help it. You do not understand, you cannot understand; I am always, Nanette, so miserable. I know how wrong it is. I know the folly of remembering. I am convinced that incidents should be buried when they come to an end; that to brood over them is like lingering by a corpse and seeing it blacken. But how can one try even to begin to forget, and if I could, it would be so heartless, so false—so faithless!"

Nanette swallowed the sobs that rose in her own little throat. "If you would not be so intense, Celeste! Why must every passion be exhausted before you can be satisfied? It leaves you forever weeping over the ruins."

"I know—I know, dear. Don't let's talk of it. You must love me—love me with all your pure heart, darling—kiss me, Nanette!"

She raised her tear-stained face, and Nanette pressed her lips to her wet lashes.

CHAPTER V

"Thou art all fair."

A few hours later they were seated in their box at the opera. Celeste in a velvet the color of April leaves; the diamonds upon her sparkling like a sprinkle of rain in sunlight. The *neglige* appearance of the afternoon had entirely disappeared. Her hair was caught back from her temples and held up high on her head with a spray of emeralds. She was leaning forward with her arms resting on the railing. In her hands a bunch of feathery fern, that drooped downwards. Above her head the chandelier bursted with light.

Her face was pale, she was oblivious of the throng about her, lost in the passionate strains of the sweetest love duets the world has ever heard.

Hugh Gordon, standing opposite with his lorgnette leveled upon her, was thinking.

“Is it all body with her—no soul? Do those eyes, so brilliant, shed no rays from within? Is it only a dazzling reflection? Would God have made her so perfect, and given her no heart?” Then thoughts of how tender she had been, how passionately sweet only a short time back rose to his mind.

Tears filled his eyes, and slowly turning he left the theatre.

“I am in no mood to be here,” he thought, “I see only her, and the music is maddening.”

CHAPTER VI

“His locks are bushy.”

It was growing quite late the next evening, when Celeste, closing her tablet, said a little nervously, “Nanette, I am going now to call on Carl Wentworth, the organist; will you go with me, or shall I drive you home first?”

“Oh! I will go with you.” Nanette laughed. “I never desert you at a critical moment; besides, I have some curiosity.”

They drove first to a drug store, had the directory brought out, bent their heads over the book, and, Celeste, taking down the number, named it to the driver, and ordered him to get them there quickly.

“How do you like the location?” Nanette asked with a quizzical expression, when they had driven some distance. “It is a queer part of the city for two flashily-dressed ladies to be approaching at this doubtful hour. No telling what kind of place he lives in.”

“Oh! I shall only have him come to the carriage and appoint a time when he will call upon me.”

“Is that the idea! I thought you meant to drift into the harmonious world at once, and make him play while your voice penetrated the gates of heaven. Don't think I should have come if I had known this was all.” Before Celeste could reply they had stopped before a small, dirty-looking grocery store; in one window there were cooked hams half sliced, batches of rolls, cold pies, etc. In the other, flour in cotton bags, stamped in blue letters, coffee, soap and sugar arranged in separate little squares. To the left was a narrow dingy door, above which, half-erased, was the magic number.

“Just ask Mr. Wentworth to step to the carriage, Upton,” Celeste said; “that a lady wishes to see him on business.”

Upton disappeared, and returned with the answer that, “Those who wished to see him must come to him.”

“It grows exciting,” said Nanette. “But surely, Celeste, you will not enter that dreadful looking place,” laying her hand on her sister's.

“It seems that I shall have to,” Celeste replied, laughing. “I shall not go back now. Come, you must go with me.”

They entered the narrow door that almost shut them into darkness.

“I wonder what will be the end of this!” Nanette said, lifting her skirts and following her sister up the steep stairway.

“I’ve played audience to so many queer things, that I am not surprised at anything you do, but this is so dirty.”

Celeste said nothing. On reaching the top of the steps, they saw a door slightly open, through the crack of which streamed a misty ray of daylight.

Celeste knocked timidly, she really did not know where she was going, and felt that a summons to enter might lead to anything, disreputable or otherwise.

The voice that answered was sweet and euphonical as a minor chord.

She pushed open the door, and they crossed the threshold in an awed manner full of misgivings.

Seated at a roughly planed table was the object of their visit, his back to them, his head bent forward; arranged about him, methodically, were sheets of manuscript music.

He neither turned nor looked up for some moments; and not daring to interrupt him, they took occasion to scan the room.

The floor was bare, against the walls piled up

to the ceiling were walnut boxes three feet long, by two deep, each one had two strong silver handles and a combination lock; they afterwards learned that they held music, and were arranged, in case of fire, to be thrown with safety from the window.

Ten or twelve cabinets of various sizes and descriptions, a rough-looking lounge covered with loose skins, and several plain unpainted chairs completed the furniture, except that in one corner stood a wooden box turned up on the end, supporting a rusty tin basin and a half-used bar of soap. On the back of a bottomless chair was a coarse brown towel crinkled and soiled.

Articles of clothing, including a leather jacket, hung on the door.

The two women were observing these strange surroundings and at the same time watching the man at the table, whose face they could not see; when, with a sudden vigorous movement he sprang from his seat, threw back his head with an air of masterly patronage, and confronted them.

The next moment he placed his left hand on his breast and bowed so low that the long curls which covered his head like a bushy mane fell over his forehead.

When he raised his eyes it was to let his gaze fall on Celeste, instinctively recognizing that it

was she who sought him. Such a light simultaneously flashed from them, that she involuntarily closed her own.

Never had she beheld an object so odd. In height not over five feet six inches, but with a capacious chest and shoulders that would have befitted a man of six feet. He was dressed in a coarse suit of dingy brown, worn and soiled, he wore a grey flannel shirt, and no necktie, and his shoes, that had never been blackened, were heavy with protruding soles, a quarter of an inch thick.

On the little finger of the left hand sparkled a large solitaire diamond, set in cross bones of ebony.

The light from the setting sun shown full in the window, producing a yellow glare at his back. Beyond through the leafless trees the faint red of the sky was discernible.

He seemed more beast than man, so clearly revealed in these strong colors, with his shock of hair, like the mane of a lion, and his brown tintless clothing. He had heavy logy jaws, and large ears, his eyes were black, somewhat closely approximated, and possessed a restless glitter, indicative of shrewdness, the nose was delicate and sensitive, the mouth wide, lips thin but sequacious.

Hideous to some, beautiful to others. Celeste

felt the beauty; Nanette stood partially stupefied, looking at the two, wondering whether her sister would turn and go, or stay and carry out her ridiculous scheme.

“I came,” said Celeste, timidly, “to ask you about singing in your choir.”

“I am sorry, madame, if that is your mission. I have had many like you before, but never found them of any service to me. I do not think you can sing, I am sure you would not perform the work I should require of you.”

Nanette smiled and walked over to the window.

This was growing amusing. Celeste refused, and not only refused, but told she could not sing!

Celeste flushed. She felt in the presence of this man—this strange creature—embarrassed. She began to believe that possibly he could require more of her than she could fulfill.

“I should not mind the work,” she said in her low sweet voice, letting her great eyes rest upon him, eyes that some one had said seemed always seeking protection; “and I might not sing to please you—but I can sing.”

Nanette screwed up her eyes in approbation of her sister's courage, and continued to look out the window.

“So they all think, madame. However, I

like your belief in yourself, besides it is a part of my duty, to give all applicants a trial. Would seven o'clock to-morrow evening suit you, at the Church of St. Andrew?"

Celeste answered "yes," remembering at the same time an engagement, but not daring, for a reason she could not explain, name another time.

It was impossible to longer pursue the conversation.

He stepped by her, held open the door and waited for her and Nanette to pass out.

He did not escort them to the carriage, but they caught a glimpse of him as they turned the corner, standing in the doorway, with his hand on his breast, and his head deferentially bowed.

Nanette burst into shrieks of laughter, as soon as they were out of hearing.

Celeste joined in, but nervously.

"Is he not beautiful?" she asked in a subdued voice.

"Beautiful? That dirty, bushy headed thing? Why Celeste! you must be crazy. Surely you mean to stop this nonsense, it is not only foolish dear, it's disgraceful, you couldn't have anything to do with such a looking object!"

"I surely could, only I do not think he will permit me."

Nanette shrugged her shoulders for the third time, and they drove the remainder of the way home in silence.

CHAPTER VII

"A most vehement flame."

Punctually at seven o'clock the next evening, Celeste's carriage drew up to the church.

Wentworth, who was standing on the sidewalk, motioned to the driver to follow him round to the rear entrance.

He opened the carriage door with an impulsive movement, did not help her to alight, but turned his back, ran nimbly up the steps and led the way to the edifice.

Celeste carried a small roll of music in her hand. She ascended slowly, feeling nervous and excited.

As he bowed to her in his quaint way, the same electric flash lighted his eyes that had caused her a feeling akin to a shock the evening before.

Without any particular reason she wondered half consciously, how old he was. He might have been any age, she imagined, from eighteen

to fifty. The power of many years of thought was in his face, yet it struck her, that it contained the glad innocence of a boy of ten. Nanette was right, he was hideous and queer, and yet it seemed that she was looking on beauty mysteriously heaven born. She also felt out of place, but in a maze of fascination.

He relieved her of her music, and hastily mounted the broad stairway of the interior, which was lighted by a single burner.

It was altogether pantomimic. At the top of the first landing he paused and with his hands on his breast, bowed again as she passed him. Celeste could not resist smiling.

“What a strange being!” she thought, continuing to ascend. He opened two more doors, bowing each time as before, till finally they were in the choir loft. Here he ran about with quick flitting movements, turning up the gas around the instrument, arranging the music rack, and making a thousand preparations, that made her more excited than ever.

She felt as if she could not sing a note; her hands which were pressed nervously one over the other, hard on the railing, were cold and tremulous, and her throat was dry and parched.

She recoiled at the idea of his criticism. She remembered that she sang by no pronounced

method, and the knowledge of it for the first time troubled her.

How gloomy everything was! could any being sing in the midst of such cold impassive surroundings?

The church in front of her was almost black, some of the cushions in the pews had been turned over and doubled up, during the cleaning in the afternoon, and looked like white ghosts crouched in the seats. She wondered how many coffins had passed up the aisle. Then her thoughts as he brushed by her, lightly touching her skirts, returned to him.

If he would only say something—anything—and be a little natural. She had been hearing tales about him during the day. From one lady, that she had a little friend, with a divine voice, whom he insulted by telling her that she sang like a goat, and taking her off on the organ with the most hideous sounds, before the whole choir.

Finally he opened the music, and sliding on the stool, set it up before him.

He handed her a duplicate copy of the one he had selected, and played the opening bars.

Celeste could not utter a sound, her heart filled her throat, and throbbed mercilessly.

He turned to her with flashing eyes.

“I do not play trash any oftener than I can

help," he said; "when I strike those chords again you come in."

She felt herself glow angrily. For the instant she was tempted to leave the church without a word, but somehow she did not dare, and giving the music she held a slight impatient shake, she summoned all her strength and came in on time when he played again, at first timidly, but gradually she gained courage. Her voice seemed to flow into the great empty church with such ease, and the organ, to which she had never sung before was like another rich sonorous voice supporting and sustaining her own. Scarcely conscious of it, she sang louder and fuller. She could hear the breathing of the man behind her distinctly growing heavier as the piece progressed.

When the climax was reached, she had lost all fear. Her heart was wildly beating with nervous delight, but her voice was steady and gloriously registered. On the highest note there came a thunderous crash from the organ that contracted her throat and silenced her. The bliss that separates the true musician from the rest of the world and makes him the possessor of more than artist, poet or sculptor ever dreamed of was experienced by them. The divinest of all ecstasy was attained. The most rapturous of all emotions was reached. There had occurred that

which in its intensity hurled them into a sea of light, and divested them of strength.

The blending of souls through the medium of sound!

There is no joy like unto this, save the fulfillment of love.

Music to the musician is not only the expression of his noblest thoughts; the outpourings of his heart's gentlest, tenderest, sweetest feelings, but also physical indulgence, stimulating exaltation, sensuous dreaming with a climax of sublimation. The fact that one can share these emotions with another, causes them to abandon the world to dwell a band among themselves, revelling in experiences known alone to them. Celeste was trembling violently, and leaned against the organ stool for support.

Wentworth turned quickly to her, his leathery face was white as the keys his fingers had left. His eyes glowed and his countenance was glorified, transported by the joy for which he had waited all his life, and that was at last upon him.

"You are of the chosen," he said; "you are worthy to be admitted to the realms of the few! Will you walk with me in the circuit of the light? for child you are yet in the shadow of the truth. The glory which would blind another, you may stand in the midst of revelling! you must be filled with longing, ever groping to tear the veils.

Such trash as this!" striking the music with the back of his hand, "is only an impediment to you."

"I have always considered the piece beautiful," Celeste said.

"It is because you do not know—and you are worthy to know."

"Ah! but tell me," she asked, clasping her hands, and looking deep in his eyes, "how did it come to you! how have you been able to—"

He interrupted her.

"It came to me," he replied, quietly, "from God. I did not have to be taught. I have always known. Few can see for the greatness of the light; you can."

"I cannot understand," Celeste said, vaguely, "will you let me come here, join your choir, work and learn?"

"You may do so certainly, but I would not advise you. It is mechanical, monotonous work. Enlargement of ideas is suppressed for the sake of conventional rules. You would gain nothing by it. Do you not know that in churches if a soul breaks forth in unlimited praise to God on high, that the minister sends a note, requesting discontinuance of such music? He alone is allowed to stir the hearts of his people. I would not keep you here under such pressure. Oh!

the choir, the choir, you do not know what it is. You are beyond such plodding."

"But you do not understand, I am seeking occupation, I am tired of the emptiness of my life; I have been in churches, when the voice of the singer comforted me so, and I thought that at times, if I could sing when my soul seemed reaching out beyond its surroundings, that I too, might solace some one. In my world they would think me mad. Ah! if I had a separate life to turn to—something—"

Her eyes were full of longing. The pain in them suffused into tears, that misted the eager light they contained, and caused her to cease speaking.

"Poor hungry one," Carl said, absently—"I pity you. It is the same old story, but listen! There is no power to which you can turn, save self. The instinct which prompts you to express yourself to others, and desire sympathy, may gratify them, but that only which is within can bring you comfort. Ah! if people would only pay tribute to the rights of individuality, listen to the sweet plaintive, pleading calls from within, walk alone instead of following, wander from the crowded highway into the forest, and stand blessing God, rather than lauding men. Oh! thou chosen child, forsake your present life, renounce those

who mislead you, look to yourself—live within yourself!”

“Would you have one become isolated?”

“I am.”

“Are you happy?”

A triumphant light broke over his countenance, and his voice rang out in the still church. “Yes, perfectly so,” he cried, “though once I was not. There were years of doubt and uncertainty, the period through which we all have to pass. Years when I was submissive, not exultant—sympathetic, not self-contained, more generous than just; when my heart swayed me, and my emotions struggled—now I look to my mind and power! Did you ever think what a great thing it is?”

He continued excitedly, “This right of every being to his own devices, that each man has the making of his life, that his thoughts are exclusively his own, that though there be Dantes and Shakespeares and Miltons and a score of others, no being has ever had, ever can have, his exact thoughts; that they are a special gift from God to him; is not it a sublime thought, sufficient in itself to breath energy and perseverance into every one, and obliterate idleness from the vocabulary of every language? Ah! the cowards who are led by the few, who see nothing in themselves but to follow. I live alone

shaping an individual end. I am bothered with no one who does not interest me, or serve a purpose. I do not wear fine clothes—I go dirty, and they let me alone, and if they intrude I say rude things, and that ends it.”

He chuckled to himself in a simious fashion.

Celeste felt for an instant repulsed, still strangely interested.

“That is not kind,” she answered, timidly.

“Why should I be kind? They gaining—I losing! I live within myself, I ask nothing—I am content. Some day I will give the labor of a lifetime to the world. Will not that be kind?”

“Have you never loved anyone?” she asked under her breath.

“I know no such thing,” he burst forth with fierce sullenness; “animals sneak off in Paris, and fools beget children. I have told you, I am sufficient within myself.”

No woman had dared before to speak to him of love, this one should not. A vivid blush sprang into her face.

“I must be going,” she said hurriedly, drawing her wraps about her; “I have detained you too long;” then looking up, “I have met with a disappointment, I am sorry I can be of no use. I had become so interested in the thought, and I had hoped some time you would play for me.”

For a few moments he was silent, carefully rolling her music.

“If you will come here and work and study, at the end of three months I will play for you, not before.

“I will pay you any price,” she said, eagerly.

“The words are unworthy of you,” he answered, gently; “I mean if you will come and be a disciple, giving your soul to your work I will throw light upon darkness. I will lead you into worlds where others do not walk, only the chosen few, and even while dwelling upon this earth, I will lift you to the realms of heaven; will you come?”

“I shall forsake all else for this joy.”

“There is hard work before you.”

“I am impatient for it.”

“Each day at seven I will be here, you can come when it suits you.”

He opened the door, and she passed out down the steps to the sidewalk. The skies were peaceful as though the sleep of the angels depended on the quiet, the moon shone softly through a haze. Celeste felt strange, the world and all life was unreal. It was almost a surprise to see the carriage waiting for her. She stepped into it, and drove off. Peering through the window, she saw that Wentworth had followed her

down, and was standing on the steps, his head thrown back, looking up at the heavens.

When she reached home, the sound of voices greeted her as she entered the hall. There were several hats on the rack, and canes with silver handles. Nanette's little seal skin coat was hanging on one peg.

The amber glow cast a faint gleam on the black marble floor, and touched the fur rugs with color. Someone was senselessly picking the banjo inside the closed doors. Nanette was laughing, and singing alternately; she heard a wine glass fall and break. Hesitating at the door, as if about to enter, then passing her hand wearily over her brow, she ascended the broad steps to her room.

CHAPTER VIII

"I sleep but my heart waketh."

Wentworth stood still waiting for the sound of the carriage wheels to die away, then, sticking his hand in his pocket with a quick monkey-like gesture, he drew out an old astrachan cap, which he put on his head and pulled down to his eyebrows.

Suddenly he turned and locked the church door. Running down the steps he folded his arms over his breast, bent his head, and walked rapidly up the street.

Many blocks were traversed before he finally paused in front of a small plot of ground, out on the borders of the city. For a number of years it had been his dream to purchase this little piece of land and build upon it a house of his own construction. With this end in view, he had become miserly, hoarding every cent till now nearly twenty thousand dollars lay secreted in

one of the drawers of a little cabinet, made safe by a combination lock of his own invention.

His mind, when not absorbed in music, turned almost exclusively to mechanical things. He invented locks of all descriptions, and was surrounded by articles of intricate machinery, which he delighted in taking to pieces, cleaning and then replacing. He declared he could make a watch, and did repair his own. Steam engines of all kinds interested him. He served an apprenticeship at organ building, and allowed no one to touch his except himself. He was thoroughly conversant on so many topics, that in some remarkable manner he seemed to have acquired universal knowledge. Besides all this, he was cranky, high tempered and irritable, and asserted that for every act of kindness he had ever done heaven had seen fit to send him some punishment. Physical pain of any kind caused him extreme anger and resentment. The mashing of a finger or any ordinary accident would make him fall down in blasphemous curses, for which he would afterwards pray for forgiveness. It was also his creed that the poor should of a right go dirty and wear rough clothes; and he hurled at the luxurious such biting sarcasm that they were glad to keep out of his way.

The moon had grown luminous and crystal; occasionally black, hawk-like fingers smeared it

with smoky irregular figures, but she would hide for a second and come out clear and undaunted, and shine unobstructed on the little square of ground now almost considered his own

He was in the habit of going there constantly, and planning over and over again the house that pleased his fancy. Always he had it surrounded by flowers; they were to grow at their own sweet will, over the walks if they liked, and up to the very chimneys, but never to be plucked, believing that they had a specific purpose from God, and that when pulled they were deprived of their rightful resurrection. It was only another of his peculiar fancies.

He stepped into the center of the little plot, and stood gazing about him half vacantly.

For the first time the arrangements of his rooms grew confused; at every door a woman's great dark eyes shone upon him; from the arches hung necklaces of jewels; in the corners were marble statues of women with human eyes the color of gold, from which tears streamed in crystal drops; on the floors were fur cloaks and silken robes. He saw the whole but dimly through meshes of golden hair.

Finally everything vanished, but two eyes fervently glowing, that seemed to burn into his very soul.

He heard a voice rise higher and higher; the

air seemed filled with the faint perfume of the jessamine flower.

His breath came quick and hard, as it had done before that sublime revelation of affinity, his brain grew dizzy, and casting one startled look about him, he turned and left the place, walking rapidly as before with his head bowed on his breast.

Reaching his home, he opened the little cabinet and took out the money, and commenced to count it, but soon his hand ceased its work, his lips their muttering, and he stared at the notes absently. A great feeling of loneliness, the first he had ever fully known, came over him. His compact frame trembled, he leaned his arms on the table, and dropping his head upon them broke into uncontrolled passionate sobbing

The solitary candle burnt out, the moon came in, glided up to him, rested for a while on his bowed head, and stole out leaving only darkness, before he threw himself as he was, on his bed of skins and fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX

"I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine."

Celeste did not visit the church again until the third day; in spite of her desire to do so, she was prevented by some feeling of hesitation which she could not explain.

Each evening when seven o'clock came the thought of Wentworth, perhaps patiently waiting for her in the gloom of the silent church, made her restless and absorbed; she pondered over the situation with little satisfaction to herself.

How different her plan had ended from what she had expected, she was not to sing at all it seemed, not even to hear a melody, but simply to enter into a field of musical thought, and instruction with this strange creature, half beast, half God.

In the midst of her reveries, that dazzling light from his eyes would flash before her, and blind her even as it had done in his presence. She could not take her thoughts from him. When she recalled her song, with the throbbing sustaining accompaniment and sudden blissful termination, she quivered with delight, and yet at times with the silken gowns clinging to her, the subtle perfumes in the air, the subdued lights, and the cultured voices of society around her, the memory of him was almost repulsive.

He was unclean and unkempt, the sleeve of his coat was ripped, above his low quartered, coarse shoes his stockings were snagged, and he seemed never to have combed his hair. But what hair! Almost golden in color, yet in shadow so dark, hair so changeable that his tempers seemed reflected in it. She longed to run her fingers through the curls clinging and arranging themselves about his head, but feared to experience the thrilling pain that even his glance had caused her. She stepped from her carriage, and walked up the church steps. The door was slightly ajar, revealing the dim light from the one stair burner. She entered and ascended to the choir loft. As she proceeded, the sound of the organ soft and wierd and passionate greeted her ear.

She leaned against the banister and listened, but in a moment all was still, and she moved on.

Entering quietly she beheld him seated before the organ, his elbow resting on the key board, his head upon his hand, the lights encircling him.

He sprang to meet her, then as if suddenly remembering, stood still and bowed in his old fashioned way, now quite familiar to her.

“Had you begun to give me up?” she asked, smiling.

“No, I believe you are faithful, three evenings is not long to wait.”

“But how dreary! you must have been very lonesome.”

“I had not thought of it, I am used to being alone. Is it warm enough for you?”

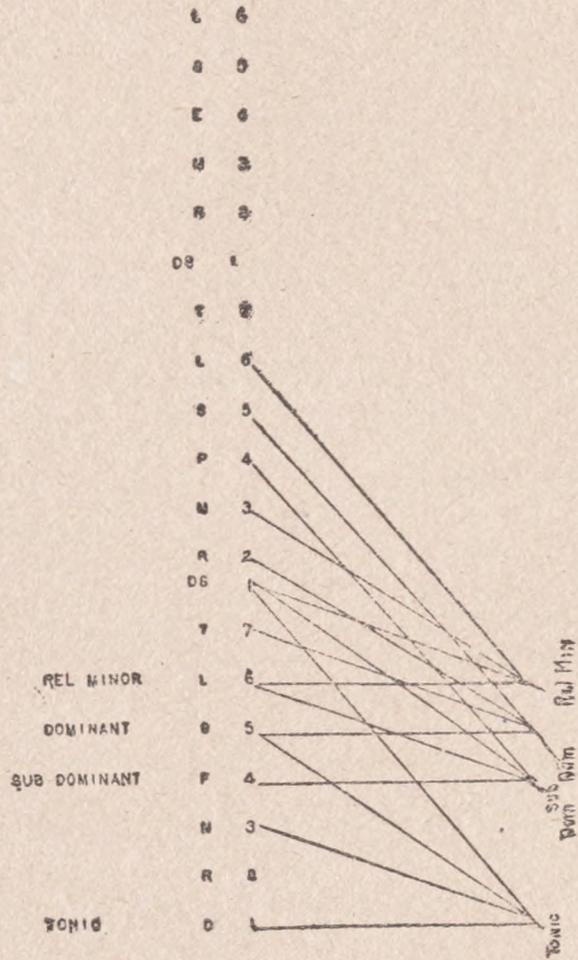
“Quite so,” she answered, throwing back her furs, and taking the seat he offered.

Without further remark he put his hand in his pocket, drew out a roll of paper, which he unfolded and handed her.

It was a perfect cryptogram, containing signs and letters that had for her no meaning what ever.

The first was fashioned in this manner:

PASSION



There were many others far more intricate and puzzling.

Celeste looked up at him perplexed.

He smiled, and taking his seat by her, commenced making explanations. At first she could not understand, and bent over his knee, on which the paper rested, with a look of blank inquiry: but after he had asked her many questions, prompted, corrected, and applied her answers, the problem opened up before her, and she saw

in it a simplification of ideas which had long disturbed her, she felt that indescribable glow as though her brain were being dusted of cobwebs, and the light beginning to shine. She experienced the satisfaction of acquiring knowledge. It was as though a mental sun gradually rose and gave shape, color and significance to figures, thoughts and impressions, before witnessed through clouds.

She felt suddenly warm and radiant in this dawning light, and the beams seemed to radiate from Wentworth.

There was a flood of intelligence in her dreamy face. She wanted to lay her hands on his shoulders, gaze down into his eyes and silently question his great knowledge and power of imparting.

But she could not but help notice that he was very careful to keep quite apart from her, and to draw back whenever she approached him, as her interest in the paper he held increased.

When the lesson was over, she expected to discuss it with him, possible even that he would play a few chords in further explanation, but he said nothing, and walking over to the door opened it for her to pass out.

Celeste was uncomfortable and dissatisfied after she left.

She held the paper that he had given her to

study in her hand, and felt worried that she should have it. What was this man to her, that she should go to him, and accept his instructions without pay? A perfect stranger who was not even sufficiently well-disposed to speak a few words when the lesson was ended.

The unconventionality of the affair jarred upon her. It seemed impossible that she had been sitting alone in that gloomy church with that queer man. She really felt afraid of him now and almost determined not to return again, but to send him a note declining to be the recipient any longer of favors from him. Although the absorption of knowledge from him had been intensely delightful, it was entirely unlike the emotion of both when he played, and she had sung, and the agreement been made. Besides, what good would it do her to enter into these scientific studies? She never could compose.

She already vaguely understood what he meant by saying that he did not care to hear music, but preferred to read it in his room, removed from the very sight of the instruments and human beings who spent their lives distorting the creation of genius.

Not even the best, he said, ever reached the conception of the composer. He heard his own orchestra, enlarged to any size, where every artist was perfect, and every instrument blended.

He heard his own Faust, his own Tannhauser; his Marguerite was a vision, a dream, an ideal, not a fat German woman who sprang from the gutter. There were never any sharp tones from his singers, from too much wine or beer drinking. The costumes they wore were not spotted or soiled. Carpets were never laid on his stage enveloping you in dust; there was no hammering, no delay. He had but to close his eyes, and the whole was before him, the ocean if he desired it, perfect.

She remembered the color that tinged his face as he told her this and burned in his thin lips, and that it had paled suddenly, in his earnestness, when he tried to explain to her, that she must work to comprehend these things.

He also said that sometimes, unable to sleep, he had risen from his bed and sought his organ, but it was because of the fullness within him that had bursted if it had not overflowed. A desire for expression, he explained, as one prays aloud in extremis. It was the upheaving of his soul, an offering to his God, and, he added fiercely, that had he caught any one listening he would have killed him.

Bah! It was all nonsense!

Did she care for greater enjoyment than she had experienced, all her life, in hearing music?

But had he not said he would throw light upon

darkness, and lead her into a world where only the chosen could walk!

Would she prove herself unworthy?

Three months was not so very long, and he had promised that then the reward should come.

Having so decided she went at first twice a week, then three times, and eventually every evening.

She was not sure that she liked to go, but was impelled by a fascination she could not resist.

The unique method of instruction continued to delight her, and she gave up her time exclusively to study; fearlessly neglected society, which commented upon her course mercilessly.

Wentworth could find but little fault with the progress she made, but he required her to be alert and attentive, and grew angry when she forgot, or failed to understand in the slightest degree what he strove to teach her, expecting from her almost unnatural advancement.

In his presence she was under the most violent excitement, when his eyes met hers she felt the blood surge through her heart. If he passed behind her back, it was as though a flame of fire sped by. If by any accident his hand touched hers, a sharp pain like an electric current ran through her.

She did not feel love or its intoxication, but a physical affinity almost doloriferous. At times

the feeling of revulsion for him was momentarily insufferable.

He devoted the entire time she was with him to her instruction.

He did not permit her even to stand any nearer to him than was actually necessary.

Once yielding to an irresistible impulse, she laid her hand upon his shoulder. He started from her with such indignation that she never dared to approach him again, yet sometimes she had gone so far as to think he loved her. She had caught him with his gaze fixed upon her, full of rapturous adoration, and once when she was leaving, as usual, without a word from him, he extended his hand as if to detain her, and looking up, in surprise, she saw that tears were in his eyes.

She hesitated, stretching out her hand to him. She felt there was so much they both desired to say, but before she could utter a word, he opened the door, and ushered her through.

It was very irritating, and she felt piqued, which was unfortunate, for it incited her to mental resolves although as yet unformed and unexpressed would ultimately become disastrous in effect.

Why could he not let her speak a few words with him? Was he a saint that he should hold himself so aloof, and become angered at her

mere touch. She who looked men to her feet at will!

He might say that he was happy, sufficient unto himself, but he was not. There was inexpressible sadness about him. But was there when she met him?

Her thoughts angered her. She would teach him to appreciate her and her visits to him, evening after evening at the expense of every engagement, so for five days she remained away, but when she saw him, her heart smote her, and she reproached herself.

He was seated as of old on the organ stool, with the circle of lights about his head, but his back was to the instrument, and his eyes were fixed on the door with a piercing stare. Around them were black circles.

His face looked almost emaciated in its pallor and sufferings. There were lines of pain about the mouth that might have resulted from months of agony.

He sprang to his feet as she entered, in the same impulsive way, but the next moment placed his hand over his eyes, and would have fallen, if she had not put forth her arm and supported him.

"You are ill," she cried, "you should not have come."

"I am only faint," he murmured, "I have not eaten in days."

“What has been the matter?” Celeste asked, anxiously scanning his face, and leading him to a seat.

“I have been waiting.”

“Suppose I had never come?”

“Then I should have waited, till I knew no waiting, and you would have known.”

“I am sorry,” she said to him softly, “I have no excuse.”

“There is no need of one. If I have failed to interest you, it is my own fault, but I have tried. You will grant that I have labored earnestly.”

“You have been more than faithful.”

“And yet have failed.”

“You have succeeded,” she exclaimed with fervor. “You have made meaningless black spots, dancing fairies before my eyes. You have invested signs with souls, and spaces with life. You have poured your knowledge into my brain, and flooded it with intelligence. The spirit of your genius has entered into me, and I have been in blissful delight, you giving—I receiving all that I could. But I remained away because you angered me! why are you so cold? Why do you never permit me to speak with you? We go through the lessons as though we were two machines, and I should so love to stay and hear you talk of yourself, your strange life. Then,

too, I am impatient for the music, three months is so long, with only one passed!"

He stared at her speechless.

"Can you not speak?" She asked impatiently, clasping her hands suddenly and leaning forward, her eyes in his.

"You are not ready for the music such as I promised," he answered quietly, in his mellow toned voice, "for the rest I never dared. You listen to me, while I speak of myself? It could not possibly be."

"But you interest me strangely," she explained, "far beyond any other. I would know why you live your isolated life; why you do not give your genius to the world, and make it bow before you."

"Always the world," he said, smiling sadly, "I care not for it, I give only to God. Until now I have been unafflicted, serene, satisfied, rising and rejoicing with the sun, closing my eyes in contentment when it ceased to shine, and my work was done. But now my peace is gone, the thoughts which have filled my mind seem fruitless, my life appears useless, even my music is forgotten, I do not live, but dream. Sometimes," he added, rising from his seat, "I despise the music; what am I without it? A miserable misshapen beast from whom you would draw your skirts aside in passing! Do you think that I am blind, that I cannot see myself?"

“You wrong yourself,” she said, in her excitement forgetting the barrier existing between them. “To me you are beautiful. Ah! more, you are the realization of my undefined dreams, you are greater than I in all things. Through you I have learned to look up. Ah! If I could tell you the contempt in which I have held men, how I have classed them all alike—a grand army, equipped, pressing forward, slaying one another, selling themselves, fighting every obstacle, crawling on their hands and knees if need be, and all for one end—passion! But you—you are different—your soul is diffused through your entire body. I reverence you as a superior being. But I would have you go in the world if only for a brief season, to show them what you are, and shine with a lustre that would dazzle mankind, and bring to your feet the most critical and haughty. I would have you dress in velvet and laces—the ideal Mozart, living and breathing!”

A deep flush burned in her cheeks, her dark yellow eyes shone like topaz before a flame.

His imagination took fire from hers, his pale face glowed unnaturally and he caught his breath, but suddenly his countenance changed, and dropping into his seat he said wearily:

“It could not be, only you see me thus. The effort would bring me pain, and you disappointment. My playing is the expression of thought,

the development of theme, and not that mechanical brilliance that would please your friends. I would simply be the exponent of a whim on your part, and you would despise me in the midst of your triumph over me."

"You are not just," she answered. "Do I not forget and forsake the world to spend my evenings here? Besides, I could not be ungrateful."

"Ungrateful," he exclaimed. "I have done nothing for you, while your voice has summoned me to life. To you alone have my manners, my appearance been of sufficient importance for kind comment. I have laughed at the world that jeered at me, because I felt superior; but now before the light of your eyes, I am ashamed. I envy the wooden giants and senseless idiots who know your ways."

"It is a greater joy," Celeste replied low, "to learn your own."

"Ah! You cannot mean that—I must not, dare not believe. But could I have such words as you have spoken to-night, for life, words that only an angel or ethereal guardian could have dreamed, ambition would come, and lofty struggles for trophies that no other could earn or win, only that you should be reflected in them, and should know that they were gotten for your sake, and you would be able to distinguish my striv-

ing and my homage from the efforts and offerings of others. For unless an offering to you could be rare, exclusive, and as compared with anything for another superior, and outranking, then I would not wish to offer. Oh! God, I am nothing, have nothing, only this music that already fills me with jealous dread, lest it should envelope me until I am lost sight of, and I have learned that I have a heart, with a heart's anguish."

He spoke excitedly, his voice was hollow and hopeless, his lips were quivering, he looked ill beyond expression.

"Come!" she said, "you must not excite yourself, you are ill and exhausted, I will take you to my home, and give you some refreshment.

How could you neglect yourself so?"

"Your words are my celestial lamps," he said, speaking as if in a dream.

"Will you not go with me? Ah! why have you not eaten?"

"I could not," he said, still dreamily. "I think I never should if you had not come. Oh! that waiting—waiting—that fear of being forsaken. My God, how did I bear it! But—" He broke off suddenly. "I cannot go to your house, I would meet others, I should not know what to do, I would embarrass you; I am not fit, do not ask me."

“But you will go to please me?”

He looked at her again, in amazement.

“It seems impossible that you should wish it,” he replied, “but it shall be as you say, now, and always. Only I beg that you will not thrust me before the others.”

“I will not.”

CHAPTER X.

"To the banqueting house."

The night was warm, as though the spirit of summer was walking the earth. Above them the stars shone in groups between rifted blue black clouds.

The atmosphere was soft and fuliginous, and the street lamps were encircled with little firey spears.

Celeste ordered the driver to lower the top of the carriage.

"It is like April," she said, as they took their seats, "I can almost fancy I smell hyacinths in the air."

Her manner to Wentworth was that of a gentle mother.

She arranged the robes about his knees, and told him to lean his head back against the seat.

He obeyed her silently, and exhausted, closed his eyes.

She sat with her hands clasped gazing intently on the white face beside her, suddenly grown so tender and sensitive.

She knew that she had woven the spell about him; that if she were kind she would forsake him now before he abandoned himself to his love.

No such intentions entered her mind, however. The thrilling ecstasy of his presence was painfully blissful; the development of his passion too exciting, and she was waiting patiently besides, for the time when those strong white hands, now so still and apparently powerless, would bring forth sounds that would draw them together into a world where souls communewithout the medium of touch.

She took the old cap from his head and dropped it in his lap, and laid her hand on his brow, smoothing back the tangled curls.

He opened his eyes slowly for a moment only, then closed them again, a tremor passing over him.

The streets were very quiet, the rumble of the wheels was lulling, the faint odor of jessamine that clung to the soft robes about him, and cushions against which he leaned intoxicated him.

He felt weak and faint, but happiness, unknown before, permeated him. He saw vis-

ions beneath his closed lids, and did not dare speak lest his dream should be dispelled.

When they reached the house, the stopping of the carriage startled him. He raised his head suddenly, and unconsciously the words burst from him.

“I worship you!”

Celeste did not answer, but took him by the hand and lead him, as though he was blind, up the steps into the softly lighted halls, through the music hall into the dining room beyond.

The fire had burnt low, the door was open leading into the conservatory, the sweet moist odor stole in.

Nanette was seated alone reading.

“We have come for some supper, little sister,” Celeste said gaily, leading Wentworth in, “what can you find for us?”

Carl stood awkwardly enough just inside the portiers, the dirty cap in his hand.

He looked even more out of place than ever in these beautiful subdued surroundings, short and stumpy, in his coarse unblackened shoes. Nanette was preparing to laugh, but the sight of his pale face alarmed her.

“It has been short work,” she thought, and her face softened. She felt pity for him, whom she had held in contempt. Could this pale suffering being, this saddened man, be the exultant

imperious beast she saw, content in his cage, some weeks ago? It seemed impossible. The beauty of his countenance was perceptible to her now, as it had not been then.

"You are ill," she said in her gentle voice, "come, sit down." It was not his custom to shake hands with women, and he hesitated looking doubtfully at hers.

"Oh! You must shake hands if we are to be friends," she said. He took the tiny hand, bowed low over it, murmuring something about the honor she conferred.

"How old fashioned he is," she thought, "he must fancy himself one of the old masters, and indeed he is most like Beethoven, I will call him so some day."

She led him to a sofa, he hesitated again, "I cannot sit there," he stammered. "I am not fit. She would have me come—it is not best."

Celeste came forward with a glass of wine. "Oh! make him sit down, Nanette, he has not eaten in days, he is starving, is it not a shame?"

"To you, yes, Celeste," the girl muttered under her breath.

She felt really angered with her sister; with so much in her life for diversion, why could she not spare this poor, curious being? But she knew that she would not.

The light of interest gleamed in Celeste's beau-

tiful eyes, and she knew till it died out, she doubted not but that it would, that this creature with his illumined face, ill-favored, forbidding as he was, would be made a hero, a god. After that—well, what mattered the future to Celeste, or the consequences of the present—to-morrow would bring change, it always did. What she desired was forgetfulness of self, to be absorbed, diverted, stimulated, and that which served this purpose best she sacrificed.

Suffering, that she witnessed, caused her extreme anguish, but she avoided seeing it, if possible. She had been known to cast her wraps to the poor, who followed her to her door, but she gave orders to her servants to bring her no tales of woe.

Even now, in the beginning, she pitied Wentworth. The intensity of his nature caused her positive fear of consequences. She dreamed a few nights before that he appeared to her robed as a priest with a laurel wreath upon his brow, and unnatural black imps a foot high dancing on his shoulders, playing mandolins. Throwing open his long, purple robe he revealed to her a flaming heart. Somehow the dream haunted her. But neither dreams nor reality could affect or alter her course; she was interested, it was sufficient.

Carl looked with a startled expression at the wine.

"I cannot drink it," he exclaimed, "stimulants make me wild; the least drop acts upon me like some firey poison."

"But you are so weak, it is a light wine, it could not possibly hurt you."

"I dare not take it," he said, pleadingly, "but, if it is no trouble, I would like a cup of boiling water with a lump of sugar, and after that I will eat something, a piece of stale bread if you have it, I am very faint."

Nanette touched the bell, ordered the water and supper to be served. The tea service was brought, Celeste poured in the water herself, and when it boiled, handed it to him in a royal Dresden cup.

He sipped it noisily from the spoon, and declared it delicious. At which the two girls laughed, watching him eagerly.

Meanwhile a light supper of salads and dainties was being placed upon the table. He refused everything but the bread which he ate in great quantities.

He was even more awkward and ill at ease than ever. He tucked the napkin in his collar, and did many other repulsive, unsightly things. Every few minutes he spoke of the blessed privilege, and his own unworthiness.

Nanette talked away in the gayest fashion, and Celeste broke into rippling laughter. She was

delighted with this feast prepared for her idol, nothing that he did shocked her. She wanted him wild and abnormal, she had in her mind the taming of him, his civilization. This was only the first step. She was eager for the time when he should bow before her in his velvet breeches, with old-fashioned buckles on his shoes. He would love her so, that her word would be his law, and no matter what her fancy might be, she would be obeyed, and she, well she would love him, too! Already she could not keep her gaze from his lucific eyes, and her heart thrilled with exciting emotion.

When the little supper was over, Nanette rose from the table to go.

Carl detained her.

“I have a request to make of you,” he said, “it is the first time I have ever made a like one.”

“No doubt I shall grant it,” she answered, laughing, and taking her seat again. “What is it?”

“Once,” he said in a low voice, leaning his arms on the table and looking into her face, “it seems very many years ago, I loved a little child very dearly; when she was thirteen she died. I knew it was because her spirit and angel face were required in heaven, yet I suffered greatly. They enveloped her in violets, and put a wreath

of them on her head, and a bunch on her breast. She was very beautiful. I said that I could not play at her funeral, but when the hour came and the sun was setting, I could not keep from playing: and although the music has been with me ever since, I have never been able to recall it, until I heard your voice to-night. Some time may I play it for you? To you alone I mean."

"Could not Celeste hear?"

"It would not please her, I could not play it in her presence."

Nanette laughed again.

"I shall be delighted," she said, "but I do not understand you."

"It is very simple, to you the spiritual, the gentle tones, the blue lights, the after glow. To her the choruses of heaven and hell combined—the sun, moon and stars in red flames; the ocean set to music!"

"Do you think to content her?" she asked in pity, ignoring her sister's presense.

She knew that Celeste held his whole future in her hands, that any warning was useless, but the words came unbidden.

"Good night," she added, sweetly, "I shall dream of the little child covered in violets."

CHAPTER XI

"And his banner over me was love."

Celeste led Carl back to the sofa, lowered the lamp by which Nanette had been reading, and seated herself by him.

She wore a gown of crimson velvet, turned back in broad points from her full perfect throat. About her waist was a girdle of dark red stones, and on her fingers and wrists garnets and diamonds glittered sensuously in the dim light.

"You are a burning fire," he said passionately, "glowing and sparkling; you are the yellow flames."

Celeste shuddered.

"Do not say such things, fire is destructive. Do you feel better? Are you strong enough to talk?"

"No soul has entered paradise to-day that has known such joy as mine. I have experienced an earthly sacrament from an angel's hands."

“You would not come before.”

“I was not worthy, then; I am now, but my strength is gone. The gates of heaven were open to me, I could not turn back, to a world in which all interest is lost.”

“Then you will come to my world,” she asked eagerly. “You will throw aside these hideous garments, and dress to please me; and you will come to my house and play to my friends, and be one of us—only so far above us?”

“Better that you should come to me, child, if you know how I stand apart and view you, watching the pillars of your hope crumble one by one; leaning upon others who give way, like rotten structures; your nature scorched and over-tested, harassed until your heart-strings have lost their tension, you would then know how my heart goes out to you. Come to my world, there only is the true life. I would lead you to that which is within yourself. If you could comprehend the insignificance of the things that enthrall you, and how much more precious and enjoyable would be the hours of thought that would make you independent of them, you would not hesitate. Others have loved you, and served you well, perhaps; I would teach you to serve yourself. It is the only happiness.”

“You over-estimate me. I could not live apart from my surroundings, neither could I do

without the things you consider unnecessary; and if they are superfluous, why have they been provided?"

"Because God is merciful, and they who cannot think must have something. Those who are not interiorly endowed, are exteriorly supplied. But would you, possessing a mind, be blessed only as the flowers that unfold their beauty, the birds that send forth song, the beasts that revel in fields? Do you not feel that there is more in life?"

"I could not live otherwise than as I do."

"That is because you are asleep to your own powers. You are not happy."

"God knows that I am not," Celeste answered earnestly.

"You should be happy," he said quietly, "all life is harmony; you should be a divine chord in nature's orchestra. You are a divine chord, wrongly placed in the center of a dance tune. Ah! how the monotonous jingle and swing on all sides must hurt you."

"You seem to know all things," Celeste said.

"I feel," he answered, "that I have forgotten all things but yourself. I hear only your voice, I see only you, my mind has become unreal. I live in visions in which, etherealized, you float before me like an angel in violet clouds; but oft-times I am harassed, powerless against the strife

and sorrow that befall you. I see you in the swim of life tossed about, seeking and bestowing, now on the top of the waves, supported for an instant by one who steals from you, even while you trustingly cling; and the next minute hurled into the under-current, bereft and helpless, your arms outstretched in supplication, your very senses reeling in confusion."

"It is all as you say, I know too bitterly," looking at him with the old hopeless longing in her eyes. "But it is too late. I would be most desolate standing on the grey rock alone. I cannot leave, I would feel lost. Ah! could I have met you when I was a young child lying in the dark shade under the great trees, seeking, trying with all my young soul to ferret out the truth. It is the old story," she added, smiling sadly. "My prince appeared, I followed."

"It is not too late," he cried, ignoring the last part of her sentence, "and you would not be lonely, you would be at work upon yourself; and when you were tired and your mind and body needed rest, I would come to you. In time I should learn by looking into your face, the mood that was upon you, and that which you longed for most I would be able to give you, when once I should lay my hands upon the keys; for worship teaches service, and to serve is to understand."

There was a long pause between them, Celeste leaned her face upon her hand and gazed at the dying fire.

Carl was the first to break the silence.

“I long to comfort you,” he said.

Celeste looked into his face wistfully. “You do not know me,” she answered. “I would bring you pain, you would find me restless, changeable, hard to please.”

“You do not know my love,” he whispered.

“It is man’s love,” she said bitterly, “yes I think I know.”

“I have told you,” Carl cried aloud, “that I am different from men. The difficulty of contrivance to please I should count but proudly, for your approbation should be the most difficult to merit. I should only wish at times to be convinced that you approved. But mingle with your people, empty-headed mental paupers, walk headlong into hell because you choose to writhe there, I cannot—will not.”

He rose from his seat, as though to shake the temptation from him. She stood up before him, taller than he, the flame velvet hanging about her, her face white and delicate as a snow-drop.

“I will not persuade you,” she said, “if once you will appear before them.”

“I would raise you to heaven,” he cried, “you would drag me to hell.”

“It is my wish—my desire. I cannot explain it better.”

Carl hesitated.

“It would give me pain,” he said simply, like a child.

“It will give me joy, will not that take away the pain?”

“Look upon me and see if you still demand it.”

His sensitive lips quivered, the restless glitter had faded from his eyes, and they were turned upon her, soft and brown, full of suffering and prayer.

Celeste paled a little. It was cruel to thrust him before the callous world for its criticism.

“But,” she answered, “you wrong yourself, and I still wish it.”

“It is the limit of my adoration,” he replied calmly. “It shall be as you wish, but I have your promise for once only?”

“Yes, only for once.”

She leaned forward and extended her hand to him. That white, restless hand glistening with its rings. The hand that had rested for a moment on his brow, in the carriage, and revealed to him the magic it contained, magic that had poured through him, and left him weak and filled with visions, as though from her fingers had dripped some sensuous drug.

He looked at it eagerly. The light peculiar to his eyes gathered and flashed, but he did not take it, and she withdrew it, with feelings of piqued pleasure. It was so novel to her, this strange lover, seeking nothing of her. She was content to look forward to the time when he would be humbled and begging at her feet for a touch of those cool, slender fingers, which he was now strong enough to refuse.

He did not know that love was a fever cooled only by the fire that kindled it. All this and more he was yet to learn.

“I will go,” he said, presently, “I must sleep, I am very tired, and there is work for the morrow, I have done nothing in days.”

“I mean to make the honor of your playing for me, the occasion of a ball,” Celeste said, with affected gaiety, pulling the draperies aside for him to pass out. “I will write the description of your costume, and send it to you to-morrow.”

He bowed his head, but said nothing.

“Why do you hate the thought of meeting people so?” she asked.

“Because there is nothing in it, I am not of them. You, yourself, will be disappointed. You shall see.”

She followed him to the door, and watched him disappear from sight.

CHAPTER XII

“My soul failed when he spake.”

It was growing colder, the wind blew in sharp, tempestuous gusts; the unleafed trees swayed slightly; the dark clouds had dispersed and thinned, till the sky seemed covered with black spangled gauze, ragged and torn.

Celeste turned with a slight shiver, and was about to close the door, when a voice arrested her attention, and looking up she saw Hugh Gordon standing on the steps before her.

“May I come in a few moments?” he asked.

She did not attempt to conceal her astonishment, but answered at once.

“Certainly, I shall be delighted to see you.”

“I saw that man come in with you, I have been waiting for him to leave,” he said, as they entered the parlor. “I told you that I would never come to you again, until you summoned me, but by heaven—Celeste—by my love—I felt

it my duty to speak to you." He laid his hands almost roughly on her shoulders, and gazed into her face, his own full of suppressed excitement.

"Do you know that your conduct with that man—that creature—is making you the talk of the city? Are you mad that you will continue to keep on as you have been, for the past six weeks?"

"I think I can manage my own affairs, Mr. Gordon, at any rate I have not appointed you, my procurator."

"Oh! I am not daunted by that, I was fully prepared for your hauteur, sarcasm, anything your mood called up, but for all that, I mean to speak. Do you realize that you are suddenly seen nowhere, that all invitations are declined by you, and that the whole town is aware that you spend several hours every evening at the church alone with that creature?"

Celeste turned pale.

"It is they who are mad," she exclaimed; "I am studying. Angels could be present, it is nothing but hard work."

"Then why not have him come to your house regular days in the week like any other professor?"

"Because he is not like any other." Her eyes flashed and the color mounted to her brow.

"The man is a saint."

Gordon burst into derisive laughter.

“He does not look like one at any rate; it will be hard to make it believed, and since your intimacy with him, strange, ugly stories, things that I could not repeat to you, are being circulated about him, at the clubs. Celeste, for God’s sake, give this thing up, I know it is a whim born of your erratic nature, but you are ruining yourself; for the love you once had for me—”

She shook herself from beneath his touch.

“That which they say of him is false, vile untruth, infamous slander. With all his knowledge and genius he lives like a great stupid dog, he thinks only of his music.”

“What do you know of his life?”

She was silent, she really knew nothing.

“Ah! You see how wrong you are,” gaining hope by her silence, “remember how I love you, Celeste, and know that every word that is breathed against your name, is like the lash of a whip across my face. At least promise me that you will not go to the church again, or ride through the streets with that unnatural object by your side. Give me the privilege of hurling the lie to the first man who dares to couple your name with his, from this night.”

“I will promise you nothing,” she said, her delicate nostrils dilated, her wondrous eyes

flashing with anger, "and I will show the world that I will not be dictated to."

Gordon interrupted her.

"You need say no more," he remarked, then bowed low and walked over to the door, "pardon me for having intruded upon you; when you need a friend send for me."

She made no reply, or any effort to keep him; yet once walking in a forest with the sun dancing upon them through the leaves, and her laughter mingling with the song birds, she had unbound her hair and covered their faces with the golden mesh, that they might hide their kisses, he said, from the wood nymphs.

A moment more she heard the outside door close.

At first she stood still and gazed about her, then pressed her eyes with the palms of her hands. Jerking them away with a start, she said aloud, "why should I care? Has he not said they are nothing? Shall I be swayed by the frenzy of a jealous man, and idle club gossip? I shall not even consider them," she added haughtily. But she was trembling violently as she ascended the steps to her room.

Opening the door, she saw Nanette in her little silk flowered wrapper, serene and patient, sitting before the fire.

"Celeste, darling," she said, rising to meet her,

“I have waited in your room for you. I wish to plead with you, dear, to leave that poor creature in peace. It is almost heartless to break off the ways of his life for a temporary pastime for yourself. You will regret it I am sure. You do not care for him—you cannot.”

“Will even you persecute me, Nanette?” Celeste cried, interrupting her, “can I have no rest—must all happiness be denied me? Must I forever be upbraided? Shall every little simple thing I do to make life endurable, be criticised and condemned.”

“Celeste! Celeste!” Nanette called, excitedly, “how unjust you are! How can you talk to me so?”

But Celeste did not hear, she had thrown herself across the bed and was sobbing aloud.

“Forgive me, dearest,” Nanette said, falling down beside her, stroking her hair and trying to soothe her, “I did not know that you were worried, I did not mean to trouble you, I never mean to, I know how much you have to bear. Please don’t cry, please don’t, dear. Come, let me put you to bed, your head will ache so, poor Celeste, my darling, my darling!”

She was used to these violent outbursts on the part of her sister, and was always a ministering angel.

Celeste turned over, and drew the girl’s head

down upon her breast. "My little comforter," she murmured. Then holding her closer still, "stay with me to night, I am nervous. I want you close to me, close to me, my little child."

"Oh! I will, darling, I will. Let me get you to bed now, I am so afraid about your head."

Celeste permitted herself to be undressed, every now and then taking her sister in her arms and kissing her as one does little children.

Then Nanette lowered the gas to a tiny crescent moon, slipped her wrapper to the floor and jumped under the coverings.

Nestling to Celeste, she threw her fair childish arms over her and fell asleep.

Celeste held the little hand close in hers, and laid awake.

CHAPTER XIII

"Thou art beautiful, oh, my beloved."

Carl was in a dream of happiness.

It was the period before the expression of love, when it flutters tremblingly within one, ready to burst forth at any time, yet suppressed for the fear of too great joy.

With him it was reverential suppression. The feast was before him; the table set with its golden fruit and sparkling wines. It was sufficient as yet, to behold.

There is an innate feeling in perfect love that fears to taste, yet longs ever for the moment when through weakness that fear must vanish.

The season itself seemed suited to his mood.

The skies were brighter since Lent crept in on her knees; the spring air tenderer and more caressing; the very streets had become church aisles, with an appearance of holiness about them, in which women with hands clasped reverently

over their prayer books, walked in solemn saint-like procession. The birds were timidly twittering in the branches, on which the leaves were just beginning to grow; bluebells and jonquils were peeping up, folded still, they too, afraid. All nature was in preparation, ready to break into song and flower and sunshine. His heart was swelling with the rest.

The days were busy ones for Celeste.

She wished to have her ball take place during Easter, and there was very little time for preparation, and much to be done.

She went with Carl to select the velvet for his suit, and gave directions about the making of it, even leaving with the tailor her own beautiful picture of Mozart.

She bought the stockings herself, and presented him with the buckles for his shoes, which she also selected.

Wentworth's interest if possible, exceeded her own. When once he had consented, his soul was in his effort to please her, to do all that she desired, as she desired it.

The lurid light of passion blinded him, and he followed her about with radiantly illuminated countenance. Once when leaving her, trembling, he fell at her feet and kissed her skirts.

The next day he stayed away, afraid.

He was careful in considering the smallest

points, and would go back to the tailor's a dozen times a day to give some trifling direction, or to be sure that the idea was being carried out properly.

He brought from the bottom of his trunk two old diamonds, a ring and pin, which he spent hours in cleaning, and getting ready to wear.

He was like a child in his eager excitement, running about and dropping in at all hours of the day, to be assured that he was doing everything that Celeste wished.

He neglected his business, and was so cross and insulting to the members of the choir, that many of them had complained to the minister, and some had left. This he scarcely noticed.

His shyness had in a measure worn off, and he was more at home in Celeste's house, lying on the sofa by the hour, waiting for her, if she happened to be out, and no one was there.

Once or twice he played for Nanette, soft spiritual airs, that brought tears to the girl's eyes and gave her a sweet reverence for him. "You should be an angel or a nun," he said to her, and told her strange wonderful stories that were the themes upon which he had built his musical compositions, that would some day move the world, and introduce a new era in music.

CHAPTER XIV

"I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?"

The evening of the ball the weather turned warm almost like summer. The windows had to be lowered from the top, and the breeze wafted the sweetness of the flowers to the very street.

Celeste had decided that the floral decorations should be entirely scarlet. There were harps, guitars and mandolins, all represented in these vivid flowers. Everything was brilliant and gorgeous. The gratification of her most exaggerated conception had been carried out. She herself was decked, covered in these scarlet blossoms caught with rubies, a spray of them glowing in her hair.

The rooms were filling gradually.

There was suppressed excitement and ill-concealed curiosity on the part of the guests. Each one was anxious to see this being who had so

absorbed their hostess that they had all been forgotten.

A thousand stories of him, his appearance, his life, his genius, his isolation—even his depravity—had been afloat.

All had united in declaring the whole thing disgusting, but none had been able to resist the temptation to come.

The lights burned their brightest, the scent of the flowers was almost enervating; the piano stood open beneath its crimson arch, from which red candles shot out like blazing petals.

The latest guests had arrived. Women began to use their fans restlessly, conversation ceased to flow smoothly, all eyes were turned frequently to the door and each was impatient.

“I wish this miserable music business was over,” one young man said to his sweetheart, whose gaze he could not hold; “it is only spoiling a very pleasant evening.”

“Have you ever seen him?” said another, laughing; “I hear that she says he lives like a beast, and thinks like a god!”

“I would not let Helene come,” a décolleté beauty whispered; “I do not think it well for young girls to witness these violent affairs, especially when the woman is as beautiful as Celeste Carmen. It seems to unbalance them; and girls are so imitative.”

“I should be sorry to think that my Nina could be so easily unbalanced,” her friend answered, glancing over at her rather plain-looking daughter whom she had forbidden to walk on the street with Helene,—she had been told that Helene flirted so passing the hotels.

Old Colonel Benson was pushing his way to Celeste, very red and puffy. “Well, my dear madame,” he blurted out, “so this is the grand finale to our musical ideas? but I don’t understand it all. You seem to have revised things—it is Hamlet with Ophelia left out this time.” He laughed in his uproarious fashion, and went on. “Where is all the singing that was going to waft us old sinners straight into paradise? Why, I have been to that church every Sunday, and indeed, madame, you are responsible for the dangerous condition of my soul—you are, indeed. It is on the point of being lost, madame, from listening to that”—the habit of damn was strong, but the colonel bravely resisted—“abominable trash, delivered so fashion.”

He drew up his flat shoulders, pointed his fingers, and pulled down his mouth.

The imitation was ludicrous, yet perfect, and Celeste laughed aloud.

“But upon my word, my dear,” the old fellow continued, bringing down his voice to a whisper, and rolling up his eyes till only the whites

showed, "you are looking lovely—you are a veritable Chloris—you are perfect. Would that I were Zephyrus! You are the one woman that has wrecked my life!"

Celeste laughed again, tapped him with the end of her fan, and was about to reply, when a sudden rustling at the door, then a parting of the guests about her, and Carl stood before her, the realization of her imagination.

Her expression became glorified as she gazed on him; she half believed herself in the presence of something far removed from mortal, and longed to bend her knee and cross herself. She caught her breath hurriedly, as she extended him her hand, and her lids raised and lowered rapidly, as before a sudden light.

He was indeed remarkable looking.

His clothes, of the finest velvet, fitted him to perfection. At the knees sparkled tiny buckles, and on his shoulders large ones. His thick flocculent locks were brushed back from his forehead, and his eyes had a calm, determined look, as if ready to defy them all.

A profound hush fell upon everyone for a few seconds, then there was much smiling, sarcastic curling of the lips, and some whispering.

"Can I play at once?" Carl asked in a low voice, bowing before Celeste, "I wish to be over with it."

She could not speak, but straightway conducted him through the company to the piano.

“Stand where I can see you,” he said, almost imperatively. “It is my life that I will play to you to-night, from the beginning till now. The last theme will be my love.”

He was so pale that Celeste feared for the performance.

“Are you nervous?” she asked; “shall I get anything for you—some water?”

“I am not in the least nervous; these people are nothing to me. I am conscious only of you.”

His eyes rested for a moment on her bare, white shoulders. Her beauty overpowered him.

Could he look at her and play!

His hands were trembling slightly. Forcing his self-control, he pulled out the stool and seated himself.

“The first chord,” he said, “represents the spark of life that animated my being.”

Celeste went to the end of the piano and leaned lightly against it, a rapt look in her eyes, her bosom notably heaving.

There was scarcely a sound in all the crowded rooms. This piano playing, an ordinary affair in itself, had assumed exaggerated importance, all were waiting in breathless anticipation, many to give vent to condemnatory criticism.

The chord of life he had mentioned to Celeste,

was struck with such staccato electric terseness, that many people started as though a flash of lightning had passed through the rooms. It was followed by feeble uncertain whining strains; then the gladness of the young child was expressed, when the whole room seemed filled with the odor of violets and an atmosphere of pale green. Then early youth with glimpses of sunshine and shadow, awakening passion and suppressed emotion. Then manhood as it had been to him, with its isolation and misanthropic tendency. These strains were hideous and lonely, the harmony was close and apparently discordant; occasionally there was a wail of passionate longing and mournful prayer, but oftener the chords followed upon each other, in painful reckless despair—the bass crashed against the treble, and the treble trilled above the bass; in the midst of this as though the heavens had opened and given an angel flight to lead his hands on and on to sweetness, came soft ravishing sounds full of ecstasy and enchantment. The notes quivered and reverberated under his touch, the melody was lost as we lose ourselves in kisses, but the harmony pulsated and throbbed, and convulsively throbbed and pulsated, till every heart responded, and throughout the entire company was breathless intoxication.

Celeste involuntarily laid her hand over her

heart, the tears gushed to her eyes, and her lips trembled.

Finally stronger chords were clearly sounded, containing inspiration, hope, resolve; and then it was impossible to divine what, his fingers were seized with madness, from one end of the piano to the other they flew, not a single note was silent an instant, all joined in loud, concussive, triumphant peals. Chords shrieked, some wailed, others sobbed. Scales of exultant laughter followed choruses of praise; there was no terminal to this piece, no descending from the climax to die away in a millifluous tonic. One high thrilling, jubilant cry, and his hands dropped by his side, and he sprang to his feet.

His face was illuminated with his genius. Pale and beautiful his eyes glowed. Above them the yellow curls had fallen on his brow.

For an interval there was not a sound. People did not seem to have recovered breath. Most of them were pale. The rooms were very hot. The red flowers were wilting. The scarlet vines that had festooned the chandeliers closed their petals. Some of the candles in the floral arch had burned low and were smoking. A young girl, a consumptive, was feeling faint, and some one was passing a glass of water high over the heads of the others. A burst of applause followed that was deafening.

Celeste was standing still, with both hands pressed against her heart. There seemed to have been a responsive nerve within her for every note he had struck. He had played upon her even as he had upon the instrument and she was vibrating like a bell that has been sounded. Carl seeing his opportunity passed quickly from the room, all making way as he went.

Reaching the hall, he stepped into the recess, and leaned against the flower wreathed banister.

When Celeste went to seek him he raised his eyes to her full of entreaty.

“May I not go?” he asked. “Excitement makes me ill. I am so unused to it.”

“They all wish to meet you,” she replied.

“Will you not spare me?”

She could not refuse him. He looked ill and tired, and those dark circles were forming beneath his eyes.

“How very delicate he must be,” she thought. “He cannot stand what a child would not feel.”

Even she could not fully comprehend the immensity of the performance he had given, or the exquisite sensitiveness of his genius.

She followed him out on the porch. It was warm and still. The city was in a mist, and the lights gleamed soft and yellow, even the stars were half obscured. A faint breeze stirred the

stillness, and blew the perfume of the flowers in their faces.

Celeste looked like a floral statue erected on the marble upon which she stood.

“Carl,” she said, dropping her voice to a whisper, “we have never spoken each other’s name to one another. Will you not call me by mine before you go?”

“I have not dared. I am afraid. Away from you I long to climb the highest point of the mountain, and shout aloud your name, and all that is smouldering within me—before you I am afraid—but this once, if I may,” he continued wildly, taking her hands, laying them against his breast, and drawing her to him, “now while you are a vision, more than a reality, now while I am exalted by what I have accomplished through you and for you. Celeste—Celeste—Celeste,” he murmured over and over, then lower still, “my love—thou who hast awakened me—my life—my queen!”

She felt his hot breath on her throat, and in a moment more the impress of his burning lips on her cool smooth flesh.

Before she could speak, he had turned from her and fled down the street.

Celeste returned to her guests her heart beating, passion and exultation struggling within her.

In the hall she glanced up and saw Hugh

Gordon leaning against the wall, handsome and striking in evening attire, a look of pain and scorn on his patrician face.

"I am ashamed of you, Celeste," he said as she passed him.

She felt the blood mount to her face. She was ashamed, too, before him, but she ignored his remark.

"Ah! Hugh, I had not seen you before, I hope you enjoyed the music."

"The music!" he muttered, and turned and went up the steps to the apartments assigned to the gentlemen. For some reason there was no servant in sight. He walked over and poured out half a tumbler of brandy, and drank it. Then vaguely looked about him.

He felt that he was in Celeste's own room, and the thought caused him exquisite emotion. Everything bespoke her from the frescoed roses on the wall to the pale, silken coverlids. The odor of jessamine filled the air; her little bird in its golden cage was asleep.

"Could I cease to love her for a moment, I might despise her," he thought. "She is unworthy and yet I love her but the more. Though a thousand men possessed her I would hold her to my heart proudly, should she return to me in the end. Bah! I will not admit these thoughts—who says love is ennobling, lies—and yet through

her is not my life purer? And again, is purity born of indifference to all save one object the element that weighs in the scale of man's honor?"

He caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror, and laughed aloud at his own reflection.

"Moralizing!" he exclaimed, "I will cure that, my friend." He poured out another glass of brandy, and drank it down, then turning quickly, picked up his hat, walked over to the door—here he hesitated.

It was strange, sweet pleasure, this standing in her room.

In a moment he recrossed the threshold and was beside her bed. The brandy was beginning to swim in his head a little. He knelt down and hid his face in his hands on the silken spread.

A step on the stair startled him. He rose quickly, and striking a match, was in the act of lighting a cigarette, when an acquaintance entered. They exchanged a few words, then Hugh claiming to be tired and bored with the whole affair, left the house.

The ball was now at its height.

The musicians had entered and were playing a dreamy waltz tune.

Celeste had not recovered her self-possession. Couples whirled past her, like frolicsome shadows.

The supper room had been opened and the

strong insidious odor of coffee, was stealing in, and blending with the breath of the flowers, like virtue and vice uniting.

Never was she more brilliant, and yet never was there an evening in her life of which she could form less recollection. For she saw in the midst of the throng but one pale face with its worshipful eyes set in purple circles; above all the loud murmur of voices, she heard only that low one whispering, "Celeste," and the sound of the orchestra was lost in the wierd, passionate tones, that had told the story of a life.

She heard him discussed, praised, criticised; she also saw conversations end abruptly as she approached, and she knew that she was being condemned. But she had grown almost as indifferent as he, to these people. She had for the time left their world, and this visit to it was made like one in a dream, being in one place, living in another.

CHAPTER XV

"Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."

It was the evening of the third day before Celeste saw Wentworth again. The weather had turned cold and disagreeable; a fine misty rain was falling as she approached the church.

Some distance off she could see him in the old brown clothes, striding up and down the sidewalk as though caged by invisible bars.

As the carriage approached he sprang toward it, pulled open the door, grabbed off his shabby cap, and revealed his face distorted with such anger, that Celeste felt her heart leap with a feeling of almost fear.

"Do not get out," he exclaimed, waving her back, "they have dared deny me the right to receive you here—you a saint, an angel, a seraph, you in whose sacred presence they should bow their heads in shame!—these hypocrites, devils, fools, have said that you cannot enter here. I have torn their organ to pieces, I have——"

“Stop!” said Celeste, laying her hand upon his shoulder, “you must not talk that way; they have a right to refuse to permit you to teach in the church.”

“Ah! they did not say that, the fiends, but,” he added, his face growing more and more livid, “it is not they—they are but the instruments—it is God. His is the hand which has interfered, because I got out of my dirt, and wore fine clothes; because I dared for a moment to forget the position in which He had placed me; because I ceased work, and acknowledged my heart with its right to love and be happy; because I worshiped at your feet and forgot Him, His hand has thrust me back! He puts us all where He wants us, and I dared erect my judgment against His, and He has punished me. But I will show Him who is master of myself, though the flames of hell envelop me through all eternity! I will go and prepare a place for you more beautiful than He Himself has done; for I will combine all that He has given the whole world into one small space; there shall be music and light and soft shadows, and the singing of——”

“Hush!” said Celeste, in an awed voice, “this is blasphemy. Get into the carriage; you must not stand in the rain, you are ill already. Try to compose yourself.”

He got in without seeming to know what he did.

Celeste called to the driver to take them home, and they drove off. He scarcely paused in his talking. His excitement amounted to frenzy. "And you will come," he said, "you will come and lie on a silken lounge, with the palm branch over you, where I may look upon you and play to you, telling you in that manner of my love, my worship! There will be much for me to learn, and I shall be overpowered and afraid, but you will teach me; for until I met you I lived like an imprisoned beast. I do not know the reward men seek for love, I shall ask nothing of you, not even that you lay your hand upon my brow, only that I may lie at your feet and burn in my worship of you till I am consumed; that in some way I may learn to serve, that I may give forth to you unreservedly all that is within me, only begging that you will sometimes give me a thought that is not bought of music, and will say to me that I am worthy to love!"

"I will come," she said, softly, "I will come."

"Even though the fools prate?" he asked.

"Even though they prate," she answered low.

"Then you love me!" he cried. "It is not impossible. Ah! God, it is not impossible!"

"You must be quiet," she whispered. "Yes, I love you."

The streets were dark, the drizzle had turned into a hard rain that was beating against the panes. His eyes were wild and tears were in her own.

“Teach me thy ways,” he muttered. “Teach me thy ways, I do not know, I do not dare; I am helpless, the light is so great, and yet I am in the dark.”

He slipped down at her feet, and buried his face in her lap.

* * * * *

That night at ten o'clock he was standing in the little plot of ground so long considered his own. The pale young grass was wet, the earth sodden, but the rain had ceased, and the moon was battling her way among the moving clouds like a phantom ship on troubled waters. “It will take every cent,” he was saying to himself, “all the savings of my life—the land, the house, all must go.” But there was no sadness in his face, the glory of his love was shining there, and not even the farewell he had come to say, could dim its lustre. And indeed the sacrifice was not so great, all of which she was not a part had already lost its value to him.

This day he had given up the best portion of his living. To-night he was bidding adieu to his hope of a home, the one that he had planned and cherished in his mind for years.

To morrow would begin the expenditure of every cent he had for what he had already begun to call the "blessed abode."

He looked around him vacantly, his thoughts fixed on neither one thing or the other. A dog came up and sniffed at him, and looked up in his face, but he saw or heard nothing.

Presently he walked stealthily away, murmuring, "And there must be an organ, for the piano would only suit certain moods."

To-morrow would begin the expenditure of every cent he had for what he had already begun to call the "blessed shobe."

He looked around him vacantly, his thoughts fixed on neither one thing or the other. A dog came up and sniffed at him, and looked up in his face, but he saw or heard nothing.

Presently he walked steadily away, humming. "And there's a good fellow for the piano."

CHAPTER XVI

"For thy love is better than wine."

After these preparations for the room occupied his entire time. He saw little of Celeste, never feeling entirely at ease in her house, and constantly running against persons who almost ignored him, and in whose presence he felt the most rebellious hatred.

He refused peremptorily to play to them ever, and when addressed replied either with sarcasm or blunt coarseness that was shocking. When admonished by Celeste for this latter, he would answer that he never used a word that was not in the Bible.

The room he selected was in the top of a very high building. There were other apartments rented to artists, milliners, dressmakers, manicures, etc.

The floors were constantly being scrubbed, and the elevator was never still. In the hallway

and on the stairs were numerous advertisements, of signs and hands, painted on tin, pointing in all directions. His own room faced westward. He chose it on account of its retired situation, the beautiful view of the sunset it afforded, and the clear sweep of the heavens.

He was weeks coming to decision, having visited in the meantime every office building in the city, and now that his choice was made he felt no impatience, being content with her promise to come when all was ready. The days he spent selecting wall paper, rugs, draperies, lamps and furniture, ripened into many weeks, and it was now early in June, when standing in the center of the spacious room and viewing his work he pronounced it complete, and waited for Celeste.

He wore his velvet suit, and in his face was a proud restful look.

"It must please her," he thought, and there was nothing more than this to desire. Everything had been done by himself that was possible. Not a curtain was hung by an outsider, not a rug laid; the very furniture was left at the door for him to drag in and arrange.

It was his belief that from the day he dedicated the room to her it was sacred and no other should enter it.

Only his Wagnerian imagination could have conceived of the decorative effects produced.

The walls had the appearance of being draped and festooned in pale blue, caught aside by cupids with shadowy scarlet wings. At stated intervals there appeared to be golden pillars reaching to the ceiling, which represented angels bathing in clouds, at the base of these pillars were blooming lilies, the green leaves lying against them. The floor was of red tile, covered with persian rugs in pale nebulous tints. In one corner, beneath a drooping palm, was a velvet lounge in white and gold, and on the end of the grand piano, in a silver tube, a rose bush held a hundred crimson blossoms.

That which appeared to have engaged his attention most was the grouping and arranging of lights. There were lamps of all descriptions, with various shadings, hanging from the ceiling, standing about in corners and occupying spaces on the tables. Each reflected a different color, and the blending was soft and mystical.

Tiny earthen jars sent forth little curling volumes of smoke of a pervasive, sensuous odor.

Besides these things, odd flights of the imagination were exemplified, all worshipful in their tendencies.

One was a picture of Celeste in a massive frame, resting on an easel. It had been en-

larged from a photograph that she had given him, and painted under his directions. It was perfect in execution, even to the golden tips of her long lashes. Suspended above it was a gold crown which emitted petite dazzling gas flames, and above this, with outstretched wings, a cupid in rose marble.

This was only one of the thoughts that it had pleased him to materialize for her benefit.

Another was the parting of draperies, revealing an altar on which pale green and violet candles burned. On this also, was a small picture of herself, framed in white roses carved out of ivory.

The unceasing labor of the past weeks, the restless nights, when he could not sleep for planning and arranging in his mind; the eager expectation of the last two days, when all was complete and ready for her reception, had unconsciously told upon him. He felt fatigue now that he could not possibly shake off, and dropping into a low chair almost at the very moment of her arrival, without knowing, he fell asleep.

Celeste, bearing in mind the minute directions he had given her, at last stood before the door.

She knocked softly, but receiving no answer turned the knob and stole quietly in.

The effect upon her, as she closed the door and stood within these strange surroundings, was subduing and intense.

The sweet seductive odors, the various colored lights that met and blended with each other, the numerous draperies suggesting rather than exhibiting shades, the man himself composed in sleep, his strong white hands so quiet, with the queer ring flashing, the religious aspect of every thing, filled her with passionate adoration, and kneeling down before him, she raised his arms, put them about her neck, and buried her face on his breast.

He awoke, not with a start, but naturally, as though he expected to find her there, and drew her closer to him.

“Dear child,” he said, “this moment that has at last come to us, the seclusion, the thought we shall have, the words we shall speak, the pledges we shall make one to another, are all invested with priceless value. God seems present. He does not frown. His hand is not raised against us. He has permitted us this occasion. To me is given absolute evidence of the greatest gift in this life ever granted man. The supreme moment is here, a moment only for soulful communion.” Celeste did not speak, she was gazing solemnly into his face, and great tears were streaming down her cheeks.

He brushed them away, and closed her eyes with gentle, lingering kisses.

“But come!” he said, a joyous smile lighting

his face, "this is not a time for tears, I have that to show you, which is so beautiful, that your very soul will be filled with peace."

"It is all beautiful, beautiful," she answered, vaguely, rising to her feet, "more than beautiful, it is heavenly."

"No," he whispered, half in awe, leading her to the window and drawing aside the curtain, "it is not heavenly—it is love—there is heaven!"

"Love is heaven," she answered.

"And God is love, 'tis said," he replied, "and if God is love, and love is heaven, then heaven is love. My queen, I know not whereof I speak!"

They looked in each other's eyes and smiled, and the color surged in their faces.

Then they turned their gaze out and viewed the vast expanse of sky before them, the faint red still lingered in the far west, and the moon, a clear crescent, seemed the jewel crown of an invisible goddess.

For some time they remained quiet, standing side by side, each feeling the presence of the other, that the supreme moment had arrived, and yet inadequate to the expression of that which they experienced

"Carl," Celeste said at last, "I had such a strange, terrible dream about us last night; shall I tell it to you?"

“That I may listen to you speak,” he answered, passionately.

“We were strolling through fields smooth and green and beautiful, and before us were many hills with rivulets, and flowers were everywhere. One instant there were daisies, innumerable daisies, and the next wild roses, long stretches of wild roses, tossing and swaying and filling the air with fragrant perfume. From every flower, every tree, and every glistening pebble issued wondrous sweet melodies, but all in different keys, and ere one strain could be caught, another would chime with it, in wild discordant confusion of sound.”

“And thou wert pained, my beloved,” Carl said, tenderly.

“The sun shone bright, but without heat, like early summer; the day beauty of heaven was unfolded to us, but the sound kept on increasing. Could we but stay our footsteps they would cease, but it seemed impossible, an unseen power urged us on, once we passed a large tree, and the desire for rest was so strong upon us that we threw ourselves upon the ground, but immediately the very earth exploded with deafening music, and a fear so terrible took possession of us that we ran frantically away from the place.”

“I would kiss thee on thy ears in thy sleep,

that only the whispers of love should reach thee in thy dreams."

"Finally I grew utterly weary, my limbs ached, and I would have fallen, but you put out your hand and supported me firmly, and so we went on for a while, up and down hills, through streams, and dense woods, I all the while begging for rest, and you replying, 'we cannot, you know that we cannot.'"

"I could not have responded so cruelly to thy prayer."

"Then I became utterly exhausted; when I could proceed no farther, you took me in your arms and carried me. The sound ceased, and I found rest; sweet peace filled me, and for a while I could not speak, thinking only of my great joy. But soon I remembered that you too were tired, and I raised my head and looked up at you. Your face was pale unto death your eyes red and staring, your lips drawn and compressed. I cried out, desperately, 'can we not stop?' and with a look of sublime strength, you answered, 'you know we cannot.' 'But you have given me rest,' I said. 'And must endure for both,' you answered. At this such an agony of despair filled me that I burst into tears, and awoke. Oh! Carl, Carl, what is the meaning of it all?"

"How sweet your voice is," he answered, closing his eyes, and speaking absently, as

though the sound and not the words, remained with him when she ceased to speak.

He leaned his forehead for a second against her shoulder, and it seemed to her that she could feel the leaping of his heart, across the space that divided them; suddenly looking up, he said:

“The time has come! Shall I play to you?”

“Yes,” she faintly answered, for her throat seemed melting.

He led her to the lounge, with its white and gold draperies, and the palm branches spreading out above, and drooping over the pillow. Without a word she let him arrange the cushion for her head. Gathering up the silken train of her gown, he threw it across her feet.

The amber glow of a lamp near by shone on her face, her yellow hair caught back from her temples was like spun gold, her eyes that tried to hold his gaze, lowered dreamily, and the long lashes left a shadow on the cream tinted cheek.

He spoke not of her beauty, nor asked but once concerning her comfort. Then turning the lamp till a violet shade fell upon her, he walked over to the organ and began the performance so long deferred.

CHAPTER XVII

"My beloved is mine, and I am his."

At first the room quivered and trembled, the oboe uttered a cry as if suddenly awakened, and then followed music that stirred her senses to madness and translated her into the world he had pictured.

He had the power of interpreting to her, and while she laid with closed eyes, he led her into green fields and rich pastures; spell-bound, she saw simple homes and gentle faces, and churches where women with mournful, solemn eyes were worshiping; then graves over which they were weeping, and of a sudden the light of a palace gleamed before her, and she entered and found herself in the midst of gods and goddesses feasting and making merry to the melody of golden harps played by spirits and fairies. Then a great crash came, as if the earth itself had opened and she was tumbled

headlong into darkness. But in an instant light broke upon the gloom, as though high walls of rock had parted, and she witnessed through a firey mist scantily-dressed women, holding the heads of their lovers in their laps, or twining their arms about them; and these merged into angels, floating above blue seas, chanting songs of peace.

When he ceased to play, she arose ere the last chord died away, and dragged herself over to him, holding by the chairs as she went.

She was trembling and weak and dizzy.

She took his head and laid it on her breast.

“My love,” she whispered, “you are not of this earth!”

“Have I satisfied you? Tell me that I have not failed—it is all that I have to offer.”

“The promise has been more than fulfilled.”

“Dear one,” he murmured, “I feel so thankful. Had I failed I would have believed that God frowned on our love. But He has seen our lives, known our hearts, heard our words, witnessed our steps, and pleases to give us these moments—me, this life blessing from you. Shall we not be thankful?”

Celeste, who longed for his kisses, felt that she was in church, but she said nothing.

“Think how different it might have been,” he continued in a rapt voice. “Suppose we had

only seen each other for a moment and loved and then been separated, neither knowing whither the other went; or, worse still, that we were now parted by continents of great expanses of water. But no, we are together, able to watch, behold and commune even apart from the world."

"I feel afraid," she said "your love is so different from all other loves."

"Ah, you fear that if you should one day prove fickle, as they say of women, and forsake me, that it would be my death."

"Not that, not that," she murmured, shuddering.

"You may properly fear it," he replied calmly, putting his arm about her waist and looking up into her face steadily, "for so it would be. Even now, when we are together and speak to one another, it is as if my heart was uncovered, and you were transfusing it with life or death, at your pleasure. Ah! Celeste, you for whom I was created, you could not cause my end! I, too, fear."

The many lights and drawn curtains made the room very warm; the smell of the incense was enervating and productive of languor. Celeste closed her eyes, and her head fell back a little.

Carl, looking at her, saw that she was pale as a lily in moonlight. "You are ill!" he said anx-

iously, leading her back to the lounge. "I have overtaxed your strength."

"And yet I am happy," she answered low, stretching out her arms to him, "I love you, I love you!"

But he left her and went over and brought out a tiny wine set. As he walked it seemed to him that his body had grown very light, that his head was a whirling feather, and that he lifted his feet unnaturally high.

He poured out a glass of wine and handed it to her, but she waved it from her, and lay back among the cushions, content in her dreamy languor. He then knelt on the rug and laid his head on the pillow beside hers. He neither spoke or touched her, and the moments passed silently.

"Do you not feel that there are birds in the room?" Celeste asked at last, in a faint voice, "I cannot see but I can hear the fluttering about my ears."

"I am blind, too," Carl murmured, "but I think I can hear them."

She drew him to her and whispered.

"They are chirping madly: 'kiss me, kiss me, kiss me'—can you not hear?"

"Yes, yes; ah! they deafen me, they have caught their wings in rushing waters!"

"We will go mad," Celeste said, "put out the

lights and let the moon alone shine in, they will be still then; I am tired."

Carl rose and went about extinguishing one soft light after another, till the room was in darkness. In finding his way to the window, he stumbled against the sofa on which she lay, and, falling forward, his lips met hers for a second.

"Forgive me," he said, rising suddenly. "Thou art an angel at thy rest, I thy earthly watcher."

Then he walked over and drew aside the heavy curtains. The breeze blew in, and set the pendants to the lamps gently tinkling. The moonlight streamed through and fell upon her; the palms striped her gown with funeral shadows. She lay like one dead, with her eyes closed and her hands crossed upon her breast.

When he kneeled beside her again, she said in a dreamy voice, "I am a great bird myself, soaring, with all the little ones following," and stretched forth her arms again.

"It is the hour," Carl stammered, huskily, "for prayer."

Celeste laughed a low, rippling laugh, and finding his face, gently traced the outlines of his ears with her fingers, ever and anon pressing his lips to hers.

Carl thought the world was dissolving; he saw it submerged in liquid topaz; the trees swaying,

the houses vanishing, the sunlight over all, and Celeste and himself floating serenely, tremblingly into heaven.

CHAPTER XVIII

"From the lion's den."

At home Celeste was entirely changed. She had become nervous and restless. She did not sleep at night, and Nanette would find her at the window shuddering as if it were winter. The least sound would make her start. She would sit still with her hands folded in her lap, and the tears rolling down her cheeks. Her glad, passionate singing was a thing of the past, any reference to music excited or irritated her. The strain upon her nervous system was prostrating.

Nanette watched her, her face full of pain and anxiety. She resorted to every conceivable measure to keep her from spending her evenings in a manner so productive of harmful results.

Celeste would sometimes promise to remain at home, and at the last moment Nanette would

find that she had stolen off and gone. Nothing had ever so completely absorbed her before. Nanette felt and knew that it could not last, and she pitied Wentworth from the bottom of her heart. Had it not been Celeste she would have despised her, but any thought against her sister, appeared like sacrilege to her. Nevertheless she felt it very hard to bear.

She dreaded to go anywhere, for she was constantly beset with questions which she found it impossible to answer without confusion. She had been asked if Celeste intended adopting the stage, and a thousand other meaningless things, and she had replied so often that Celeste was not well, or was absorbed in her musical studies, only to have her remarks doubtfully received, that she naturally felt thoroughly harassed and disgusted with the whole thing. Besides Celeste's health was impaired and that almost broke her heart.

Wentworth was radiant with happiness, full of faith and altogether exultant and joyous as a child. It was his first love, and it had come to him in the full tide of his manhood.

What to Celeste was a spasm of divine delight, that might one day die of its own intensity, was to him eternal, a feeling that would be followed should she forsake him, by loss of faith, darkness and despair, and his life after might be that of a

martyr, or a fiend, but endlessly, ceaselessly, wearily hopeless.

Nanette felt such great pity for him that she longed to go to him, and speak a word of warning, but she had only to look into his face to see that it was useless, the work was done.

At last she could stand it no longer. She feared for her sister's health, and she summoned all her courage and went to her, and asked her, begged her to go away, somewhere, anywhere, to the sea shore. To her astonishment Celeste eagerly consented, and even urged that there should be no delay.

"Oh! yes, little one," she said hurriedly, hiding her face in her hands. "Take me away, take me away, I need a change, somehow I am not well, the ocean will rest me so; oh! I long for it. How soon can we go?"

Sometimes Nanette was the little mother. Always she bore Celeste's moods with divine patience. "Oh! you have made me so happy," she cried, "for days I have been trying to ask you, but feared you would refuse me. This music has so strangely infatuated you, and it was making you ill, acting upon you like some slow insidious poison."

"But I have been so happy, Nanette, and yet so miserable," she added, with a look of terror, "you cannot understand, I do not expect you to—"

no one can, I have been in this world, and yet out of it, I have seen such beautiful things, and" shuddering, "such horrible ones, too."

"Hush!" said Nanette, interrupting her, and speaking firmly, "the opium eater lives in another world, but it sickens us to hear either of his joys or sorrows. We will go where the air comes to us salt and fresh, and the only music shall be the dashing of the waves against the shore."

"Oh! yes, Nanette, and we will talk of when we were children, darling. Do you remember our visits to the country? When I would take you out in the evenings and show you beautiful things in the sunset, and tell you how many miles mamma was away, till we would both cry as if our hearts would break?"

"Yes, and I also know how you have converted every period of your life into sadness," Nanette remarked, laughing, "with me for chief mourner. I even recall when you used to bury all the dead roses you could pick from the bushes, and make me wear a newspaper veil and cry at the funeral."

"But were they not sweet days?" Celeste said, smiling sadly. "All days are sweet, Nanette, even though there be a funeral for each one, until passion fills them; after that they are bitter and sweet for a time, then one day the sweetness flies away, but the bitterness remains forever. Love

shrivels the heart as the hot sun does a flower, Nanette. I am glad you are a violet, little one. Ah! I mean to keep you in such deep shade— But tell me,” she rambled on, “do you remember the evening we went to sleep behind the turkey cover, after we had been telling each other what the little ones were saying, and how the whole household came out with light wood torches and found us at last, and how grandma was crying and wringing her hands, thinking we had wandered to the river. And then how she took us both in her lap at once? Ah! if I could lay my head in that old lap once more and hear her sweet voice saying. ‘The Lord is my shepherd.’ But they are all dead, Nanette, isn’t it horrible?”

“Yes, yes,” Nanette answered, hurriedly, “It is, but do not let us think of it, you will stay home with me this evening and we will have tea together. I have been so lonely lately that I only want to be happy to-night.”

“And you will read to me afterwards, something gentle and quiet.

“Oh! yes, I will,” Nanette answered, joyfully, and rang the bell for tea.

Later Celeste laid down on the rug, with her arms under her head, and the girl read to her, soft soothing lines from Mrs. Browning. She

was seated in a low swinging chair, and rocked an accompaniment to the lines.

“And the little birds sang east,
And the little birds sang west;
And I smiled to think God's greatness,
Flowed around our incompleteness
Around our restlessness, His rest.”

“Those words are so sweet, so sweet,” Celeste said, absently. “Read them again, Nanette.”

Nanette saw that there were tears in her eyes, but otherwise a restful content on her passionate face, and she read the words again in a low, chanting voice.

Celeste joined in, and repeated the last lines with her, saying the closing one over and over.

“Around our restlessness, His rest!”

CHAPTER XIX

“Cruel as the grave.”

The next evening Celeste told Wentworth of her intended departure.

It seemed to her afterwards that she had never seen him so joyous or radiant as when she entered.

He was playing music very unusual, almost unnatural to him, a wild staccato polka air, that had rushed from his fingers in his eager anticipation of her arrival.

He sprang to meet her, and dropped on one knee before her, gathered her dress in his hands, and kissed it.

“I am so happy—so happy,” he said, looking up and smiling through tears that rose to his eyes in very joy.

“See,” he continued, rising to his feet and leading her by the hand, “I have decked your

couch in poppies, and the wine is in the ice— Ah! we will drink, the very fever of intemperance is within me, I shall be wild as wine makes me, and I will play music that you cannot believe is in me, and you will laugh aloud, my angel, while I play—Oh! my love, I have been thinking all day that you did not understand my appreciation of our life! Last evening you stayed away. It has been a thousand years since then, but I was glad because it gave me the opportunity to think of your great gift to me; when I am with you, I cannot think, but,” he added quickly, “I could not have stood another day—what do you think I would have done? Rushed to your house, and torn down the doors—I—”

Celeste drew him down on the lounge beside her, scattering the scarlet blossoms with one hand.

“Every word you speak pains me,” she said, “I have come to tell you, Carl, that I must leave you—for a while.”

His eyes expressed a startled look, an agony of pain crossed his face, as though some invisible spirit had shot an arrow into his heart, it grew white and rigid, but he did not speak.

She took his hands, and smoothed them with her own.

“Only for a short time,” she said, soothingly. “I am ill, can you not be patient?”

“Patient, it is not that. I could be patient ever, even to the last hour, if you would return to me then as you leave me. But it will never be. A dream once disturbed but rarely returns, and if at all, brokenly.”

“But there may come sweeter dreams.”

“It is not possible.”

He dropped down on his knees, and threw his arms about her.

“Ah! beloved, postpone this parting, give me but a few more weeks, time for preparation—this is so sudden. You have not done it of yourself,” he added, angrily, starting to his feet. “Someone has influenced you—you could not have awakened so soon!”

“’Tis true, Carl, but I know that I need to go, that I must go. Feel my hands how hot and feverish they are—I do not sleep at night.”

“And am I the cause—have I tested you too far? Forgive me—ah! go—go far from me—leave me to my punishment—I have been sufficiently blessed. You have been crucified that I might see the light. Though I may never more behold you, yet will I have my remembrance.”

He kneeled down before her and bowed his head on her lap.

“Do not despair, Carl,” Celeste said, laying her hands upon the matted curls—“why should you be so hopeless?”

“Why do the shadows fall upon the mountain side when the sun is leaving?” he asked, looking up into her face

“But the sun returns.”

“Yes, the *sun* returns.”

She could not comfort him—he said no more, but his speechless agony was unbearable.

After a long silence, she rose to go, then pausing, looked about her. Here was the manifestation of his worship.

Her picture—one beneath its crown of light, the other framed in pale violet and blue candles, arrested her attention; then her eyes were dimmed, and she beheld but a misty palace in which the lights were blurred, and a man in black velvet with old-fashioned buckles at the knee stood with white, terror-stricken face gazing before him.

With the old horror of witnessing pain, she turned from him.

“Do not make it harder for me,” she said, “I will return.”

Still he did not speak, and walking past her, held open the door. Laying his left hand on his heart he bowed low and permitted her to pass out.

Celeste stood in the doorway and gazed at him for a second, then realizing the uselessness of words turned and left him.

The sound of her footsteps echoed through the bare hall, then all was still.

He walked slowly over to her picture, and kneeling, approached his face close to it, peering at it with wide open eyes.

“All that is left me—all that is left me”—he muttered, in a hoarse voice.

Then he rose and went about the room, going from one thing to another, that she had touched, and laying his hands upon it, as in blessing. When he got to the rosebush he plucked the blossoms one by one, and threw them beneath the picture.

“How easy to die there,” he said, “I shall watch the process.”

Going over to the window, he stood and looked down upon the bustling throng below. Everything appeared unreal to him. The people moving mechanical shadows. It seemed so useless to him, this monotonous passing up and down. A feeling of utter desolation took possession of him. He felt suffocated, and imagining himself ill, tore open his collar and bared his breast to the air. He could not think, his mind strayed to senseless things. He remembered once when he played he was a bear for some children, and crawled about on his hands and knees. After a while he wandered back to the sofa with his palms pressed tight over his eyes.

Kneeling down on the white rug, he stretched out his arms, threw back his head, and prayed, a wordless prayer, his lips twitching convulsively in his effort to speak.

Then he buried his face in the cushions, and kissed them, trying in the meanwhile to call her name, and experiencing the agony of dumbness. After that there was perfect stillness, not even the sound of breathing broke the silence.

Daylight came and looked in on the white, pallid face of the man asleep upon the rug, whose eyes had not closed till the first grey streak of dawn appeared.

CHAPTER XX

" Whither is my beloved turned aside."

The effect upon Celeste at the seaside was immediate.

From the very night that she bade Wentworth good-bye, she began to improve.

It was as though a weight had been lifted from her, and the nervous tension relieved.

The dreamy intemperate look in her eyes disappeared.

She rode the waves with exultant joyous cries, and laughed loud and merrily as she had not done in months. She loosened her hair that fell about her like a mist of gold in the sunshine, and tossed her head in the breeze, or laid it in the moist warm sand, looking up at the blue heavens, voluptuous enjoyment pictured on her face.

She told Nanette over and over again that she was so happy, and Nanette rejoiced each day that it was so, but feared to see her sister grow

tired of this natural life; for she knew that were Celeste turned loose in a garden of rarest roses, at the end of a week she would be sighing for extracts. But she did not hint that such could possibly be the case.

She entered enthusiastically into everything that suggested itself to Celeste, even to the ride on horseback before breakfast, which made her head ache all the forenoon.

Carl's name was never mentioned. Once Nanette spoke of him, but the look in Celeste's face silenced her for all time thereafter. Out of his presence, from under his magic influence, away from that supernatural playing, which had maddened her and presented to her mind visions, some of which she did not dare recall, a revulsion of feeling took possession of her. She forgot his great love; she did not attempt to realize, even if she fully knew, the sacrifices he had made.

She had received all that he could give, while wandering with him hand in hand in the heaven he had created for her, and on a sudden had vanished before him in the roseate lights, which had expired with her departure and left him groping in the dark.

She saw him now divested of his genius, and the picture made her shudder. She had received from him all that she was capable of receiving,

she had exhausted, not him, but her enjoyment of him, and she was thankful to be free.

She knew that those passionate hours were ended. She had not planned how all this was to be explained to him, she even hoped that the whole affair would drift away as so many other things had drifted out of her life.

On the grave of passion, flowers of indifference were blooming. The days passed, as only days at the seaside can, in varied and delightful experiences. Emile Caulfield, a new star from the far south, a man of ultra refinement, aristocratic and handsome, with a bronze complexion and dark hair that fell over his brow, was in constant attendance on Celeste. They bathed together, drove together, walked together, drank wine together, and in short enjoyed themselves in that absorbing manner in which Celeste delighted.

One afternoon they were returning from the beach, sauntering lazily in the brilliant sunshine. The day was perfect, the sky a light blue, unflecked by a single cloud, save one great white, feathery bird that stretched its wings endlessly.

Celeste was enveloped in a scarlet bathing robe, richly embroidered, her feet were strapped in sandals, her head was uncovered, and the yellow hair fell far below her waist in damp undulating waves. The sweetest peace filled her, her lips had just parted in a smile, when suddenly look-

ing ahead, she saw Carl coming towards them. Never had he looked as he did to-day. Not even the very first time she ever saw him, did he strike her as being so stumpy and altogether abnormal. He wore a ready made suit of the very lightest grey, which was too large for him in every particular, and hung down over the shoulders. His long bushy hair protruded from beneath a straw hat several sizes too small for him.

Celeste's heart seemed to stand still.

How could she before this man, whose very presence embodied elegance and refinement, speak to this queer looking object.

How was it possible to explain the acquaintance.

She did not in the least know what Wentworth would do. She was not afraid of his intruding, but of some involuntary act, or demonstration, which would reveal the intimacy that had existed between them. All these thoughts flashed through her mind in the few seconds it took them to meet face to face.

Wentworth's countenance, as he stopped before her, was luminous and resplendent with his great joy. He could scarcely resist throwing himself at her feet.

He placed his left hand on his heart in the old way, and removing his hat, which he held off at arms length, bowed graciously.

Celeste hesitated, she knew that she had his life in her hands as well as if one of them was within his breast clutching his heart. The hot blood mounted to her face and stained it in a deep crimson, but she did not stop. Inclining her head slightly she passed on, and left him standing, gazing at the vacancy her presence had left.

“What a queer looking being,” Mr. Caulfield remarked, scrutinizing her face, and wondering at her evident embarrassment.

“Yes, but quite a genius musically; he played some accompaniments for me once at an entertainment. Is not the sea beautiful to-day? scarcely a breaker.”

She gathered her full robe more closely about her and resumed her lazy gait, that had quickened in passing Wentworth. Her delicate face was calm again. It was as though she had passed through a red light and been colored and suffocated an instant by the fumigation.

“Do not let us go in,” she said, afraid of Carl’s following her.

“We will walk away from the throng and lunch on the beach on fruit and wine.”

“I shall only be too happy.”

“And hungry, I fear,” she remarked, smiling.

She turned and beckoned to her maid, who was following in the distance. “Go to the hotel,”

she said, as the girl approached. "Pack a basket with fruit and wine—do not forget the glasses—and say to Miss Nanette I beg she will excuse me from our drive this afternoon, and that we would be pleased to have her join us—it is far too lovely to be indoors." She continued, as the girl disappeared and they walked on, "the cool walls of the rooms, with the closed blinds, is so chilling at the seashore, I love to live in the sunshine."

"You are an embodied collection of the rays, yourself. I feel no difference so long as I am in your presence."

"Ah! do not flatter," Celeste said, wearily, "I am in no mood for it. I feel unhappy—oppressed by my sins, I think," laughing nervously. "Mr. Caulfield, do you not know that I believe I am a very wicked woman? It is hard to realize that about one's self, and wickedness is so difficult to clearly define; still, I thoroughly believe in this sentence: 'For it is but just that men who often arrogate to their own merit the good of which they are but instruments, should attribute to themselves the absurdities which they could not prevent.' I hug those which have occurred through me to my heart. They oppress and distress me, these involuntary acts of my life that appear beyond my control at the time."

Mr. Caulfield laughed a little, and called her attention to a sailboat in the distance. "It looks like a big white butterfly, doesn't it?" Then returning to the subject somewhat earnestly, he said, "The sirens of the world must of necessity weep over the havoc their fascinations produce. But who can say what sin is, Mrs. Carmen? For my part, I sometimes think we overestimate it. We are influenced by traditions that have descended to us, without considering ourselves whether the thing we shrink from is really sin or not. Two hundred years from now, the acknowledged views that control the passionate nature in man may be jeered at as an absurdity of a past age."

"No being will ever be born without a conscience," Celeste said, solemnly; "and the same God will be above."

"Conscience is too variable an affair to be considered from the standpoint of deduction, and the same God may not reign; that is, the same God that you and I credit, for God is, after all, personal conception. We naturally look up for heaven, yet it may be beneath the earth, and the red lights of the sunset the flames of hell—one can fancy anything. But to continue, I often think people undergo too much moral laceration, and suffer uselessly, wondering if that which is the overflowing of nature—for you

allude to but one sin—and which springs up in us unbidden, is sin at all, any more than the leafing of trees, or the bursting of buds. I mean, for example, that if a man catches the eye of a strange woman, and experiences the thrill of passion, while he is on his way for a doctor to visit his ill wife!”

They had stopped where a line of shade crossed the beach.

Celeste threw back the scarlet robe. Her bathing-dress that was still damp clung to her form. From her waist hung a heavy silken fringe that reached to her feet.

“Of course not,” she answered, impatiently, as they took their seats, “and the illustration is very trite. It is the indulging and pursuing such an emotion that is wrong.”

“There are instances when not to pursue the emotion is quite as impossible as not to desire to do so. My wife is waiting for me in the mountains, Mrs. Carmen; the little child is ill. I cannot go.”

Celeste looked up surprised. It had not occurred to her that he was married, she had not thought of it. “You are very wrong,” she exclaimed; “you should go at once.”

“I cannot.”

For a long time they sat in silence, the salt breeze blowing in their faces. Celeste was think-

ing of Wentworth; he, though under the spell of her presence, of the little sick child with tangled curls and flushed cheeks, and a woman with brown, earnest eyes, walking from the cot to the window, to watch for him.

The maid brought the basket, and Celeste emptied the richly-colored fruits on the sand and handed him the bottle of wine.

“Let us drink,” she said, “then if we cannot resist introspection at least we will not be so blue. You can go, Lucette.”

They were silent again, while he cut the wires with his pen-knife and manipulated the cork with his thumbs.

“I am not a very good waiter,” he laughed, as the wine overflowed, and she hurriedly held out her glass. Celeste did not reply, but handed him the golden apricots, and for a time they ate the fruit and drank the wine, looking from one another’s eyes to the sea, and from the sea to each other’s eyes.

Then she spoke in a gentle voice.

“I am sorry for what you have told me,” she said; “still I might have known. Life is the same with all beings. There is no constancy, save when love is very new, or unsatisfied. It is because we will not admit this, that we do not. Possibly it hurts us to involve some one dear to

us. The very books that portray life as it is are denounced."

"Simply because they betray evil and ignore the good."

"The pleasure of goodness is felt," Celeste remarked, holding her glass up to the sunlight; "when it is related, it is very stupid and may even do harm."

"Not if it savors sufficiently of the heroic. I have discovered that you are cynical and very bitter. Believe me, my friend, it is a pity—no woman should be. It is their sweet faith, their belief, even after they have witnessed untruth to them, that makes us love them tenderly—apart from our passions—and try to be better men in the very hour that we wrong them."

"Their fruitless efforts should no doubt give great consolation!" Celeste replied with a sneer: "Ah! Mr. Caulfield, we women are beginning to smile at such things. You do not wish us to think, but believe alone in what you interpret for us, you prefer us to be blind fools worshiping graven images—yourselves of course," she added, with a slight bow.

"Because it is best for you," Mr. Caulfield said, quietly, "all persons are happier for belief and worship, especially women, who, God knows, have little enough to comfort them. It is far better that they should live by rules laid down

for their own happiness. Women are too emotional to think deeply. Emotion and reason simultaneously at work is abnormal. The woman who thinks too much is more or less a deformity, and oftener than not goes through the world pitied or condemned. Emotion invariably floods the pillars of her reason; the effect upon her is maddening. My wife comes to me to decide every act of her life, Mrs. Carmen, and abides by my opinion, and assuming the entire responsibility of her existence, she is a happy woman."

"And that contents you?"

"No, it contents her, which is better."

"You content yourself elsewhere?"

"You should not be personal." Mr. Caulfield smiled. "Let me fill your glass, and don't be so selfish with the peaches."

He enjoyed watching the color deepen in her beautiful face.

Planting the bottle in the sand, he took her hands, held them in his own, and looked into her eyes.

"You are a very brilliant woman, Celeste, and the most beautiful I have ever known, especially at this moment, when the wine has leaped into your eyes, and they are sparkling in the sunlight; but you would be a far happier one if some strong man could control and direct your

life; teaching you submission through the fulfillment of your love. A man who would lock the doors on you if necessary, and say, 'it is not whether any other can take your thoughts from me, but whether he shall have the opportunity,' There is no doubt that infidelity exists, and that people are untrue to one another. You cannot raise your eyes and not see it, but a woman suffers not so much through that which is practiced upon her, as from that which she herself practices. I believe, however, that she may be undeniably true in spirit, yet sinful. She can in the same moment receive kisses, and weep tears of desire and longing for her absent lover whom she worships. These kisses make her ashamed. Every woman should have some man to shield and protect her from herself."

Celeste felt her voice tremble as she raised her soulful eyes to his face, and answered quietly: "I have felt the need all my life long."

"You would love me absolutely, and be true to me," he said, lowering his face to kiss hers, while the veins swelled in his forehead, "or I would kill you—draw your robe about you, the breeze is fresher."

CHAPTER XXI

"Yea, I should not be despised."

Wentworth not able to endure the torture of separation longer, unbidden had followed Celeste to the sea shore.

The effort to appear properly before her, which resulted in such grotesqueness, was an earnest one of days, all the while picturing in his mind their meeting.

He had fancied her starving for him, as he was for her. The dismal forebodings roused by their parting, were quelled by the excitement of eager anticipation after he had decided to go to her.

His imagination had carried him alternately into realms of woe and ecstasy. He had believed her wan and white and ill from their separation. He had seen the very life blood come back to her face, and had trembled like an aspen leaf as he pictured his lips pressed to her mouth, her

arms clinging to him. And this was how he had found her? This woman whom he had adored, this goddess whom he had worshiped, appeared before him suddenly, in her gaudy robes, a fashionable elegante, who simply bowed to him, with the blush of shame in her face, and continued her conversation with another man. At first he was dazed, the shock almost stunned him, he could not believe it possible, and then the dismal truth dawned upon him.

He saw himself as she saw him. He realized the disparity between them, and understood that all which he believed eternal had been to her but an incident.

In the midst of this blazing sun and blue ocean, the very world appeared to turn dark about him. Light seemed to vanish, he could not see distinctly, the people around him were floating shadows, the music faintly heard from the band in the distance, seemed a million miles away. He longed to throw himself down in the sand at his feet and be buried. Cruel shame overtook him. He wished to cry aloud, and tell God Himself how this woman had used him and deluded him. He who was so proud that he had scorned even the kindness of the world.

Anger that amounted to delirium took possession of him, but her face with its rare sensuous beauty rose before him, and brought the hot

tears to his eyes, and he was made weak and helpless in his great agony.

He was not tutored in contention with emotion and acute suffering.

He walked on scarcely knowing, till all the moving throng was left behind, and he found himself standing alone on the beach with the water rolling up to his feet in gentle ripples.

A scarcely visible cloud began spreading a soft vapor over the skies as though the spirit of a world of doves were entering heaven.

With modulated splash and gurgle, the waves laughed on.

His eyes were bloodshot, an angry purplish cross marked his brow, and his throat felt stiff and dry. When he found his voice it was loud and cacophonous.

“Now is the time,” he shouted, “for stars to shine in hell, for oceans to dry up and become arid deserts, for churches to send forth curses, for the skies to become hideous, for rain drops to be the blood of angels tearing themselves to pieces, for trees to shoot out devils, and the whole earth to be a smouldering sphere of fire, blistering the feet of creatures doomed to walk upon it. Saints have become harlots, angels betrayers, I have been deceived. My love is not my love. Ah! If at the last day Christians should find Christ a lie!——”

He ceased speaking abruptly. An expression of faith crossed his face, as moonlight flits over clouds.

A momentary hope that she could explain died to join the funeral of those that lay lifeless within his breast.

He never remembered how the rest of the afternoon was spent. He may have walked on and swooned, for when he recovered himself he was lying on the beach, a mile away, with the water, grown more restless, washing up over his knees.

He dragged himself to his feet, and looked about him. He felt weak and chilled, his teeth were chattering.

Presently his eyes flashed, intelligence swept over his face.

"Ah! Yes," he said, clinching his teeth hard, "I know, I know."

Then he sat down on the sand again, and wrapping his arms about one knee, gazed out on the far water. Part the time with a blank expression, and again with eager, determined questioning as though concocting a plan, and deciding what was best to do.

CHAPTER XXII

"Many waters cannot quench love."

When night came he fearlessly approached the Hotel St. Bernard, where he had learned Celeste was stopping.

As he neared, strains of a seductive mazurka the band was playing reached his ear. The piazza swarmed with people; but it all seemed unreal and phantom like. The lights from the hotels and cottages streamed out and made square crystal figures on the ground, rested on the trees, and lent a pale, fantastical color to the trembling leaves. He heard break from Celeste the laughter he had revelled in, and which, in times agone, had blended with the scales of his joyous music, and became a part of it. He would never play such music again. With pale, set face he scanned the people who crowded the porch. In one corner, the center of a merry group, he recognized Celeste. She was dressed

in some filmy black stuff, with a scarf of the same about her head.

People from the beach were hurrying past him in crowds. Dark threatening clouds were gathering swiftly in the heavens, and the waves were already dashing against the shore with sounds like distant cannon. A gust of wind blew his hat from his head, but he did not attempt to recover it.

Celeste caught sight of him on the steps of the piazza. Her laughter ceased, she started from her seat, tearing her dress that was pinned by some one's chair, and went hurriedly forward.

By all means she must avoid this mortification of introducing him to her friends, especially Emile Caulfield whom she was expecting every moment.

"I came to meet you," she said, trying to smile, and extending her hand, "knowing your objection to strangers."

"You are very considerate. Do you think you came to meet me, or to keep them from meeting me?" he asked sarcastically, ignoring her hand. "However, it does not matter, only it would but serve you just were I to take you before them and cry out before them, and to your new lover, to look upon me in my hideousness, my unexpressed deformity, and know that in your matchless beauty, gorgeous array and shin-

ing jewels, you had loved me and lain in my arms, and prayed—yes, prayed, for my kisses!”

His voice became louder as he spoke, soon they could not help hearing. Celeste was terrified.

“Hush!” she cried to him, “for God’s sake. Are you mad?”

“Possibly,” he answered, calmly, “that which I feel may be madness; I know not.”

She drew him from the portico, down towards the ocean. A few flashes of lightning streaked the distant heavens. The sky was black and the intervening space like gloomy midnight.

The laughing of the sea has turned to lamentation and querimonious roaring.

They walked on regardless, till they stood on the shore with not another living soul in sight.

The wind blew in tempestuous gusts, and tossed the light scarf high in the air, whence it fell and was caught by a wave. The sand cut into their faces like particles of fire. She bent her head and clung to him. “Take me back,” she implored him. “It is terrible here; we shall be blown into the sea.”

With one arm he held her with all his strength, and threw out the other as if to wrap the wildness of the ocean to his heart.

“What better end,” he cried aloud, “for you and me? Am I to stand off afar and watch you

as from another world? Am I to know that other men will hold you to their hearts, as I have held you to mine? Must I hear your love words beating on my brain, spoken to them and not to me? Must I stand blistering and writhing in hell to watch you, serene and content, in heaven?"

A great wave broke before them, and the seething water ran up and touched their feet; she drew back, but he tightened his grasp upon her. "See how they come up!" he cried, with the wild laugh of a maniac bent on fiendish work. "See how they come up to us—ah! if they were hot it would be better. Only a few more moments, and we have but to stand still to be swallowed up together!"

The wind blew against them so strong that they nearly lost their footing, and the sand cut into their faces anew. The lightning flashes had become almost incessant.

He took his head in her hands and bent it backward and gazed upon her upturned face, white and terror-stricken as the vivid storm-flame played upon it.

She could not speak or cry out. The wind choked her voice. He swayed her from side to side. Momentarily as she saw his face, it resembled that of a madman.

"Celeste, Celeste!" he cried, above the storm and explosion of the waves, "awake to me!—by

all the memories of the past, give your heart back into my keeping! Who can ever love you as I? Who can ever worship you so? All that I am not, you can make me. There shall be nothing that through you I will not fulfill!"

She tried to wrench herself from him, but he held her fast. The wind and fright combined had deprived her of strength.

He leaned forward and kissed her face over and over. He tore the delicate laces of her gown, and, baring her white throat, pressed his lips to that in maddening despair. He who had been so timid and gentle; he who had not even dared to take her hand except responsively, was now suddenly turned bold and fierce, forgetful of everything except his love and the anguish of parting.

The thunder, which had been rumbling in the distance, burst about them with deafening crash. The waves were rising higher and higher. Celeste broke away from him, with a cry of horror, and desperately dragged herself up the beach. Following her, he stumbled and fell on his knees at her feet; raising his arms, he threw them about her, and, sobbing, hid his face against the damp folds of her gown.

"Oh! my love," he cried, looking up at her, "do not leave me! It is the last time—my last hour! Do you not know that you are forsaking

me, and that it will cause my death? It is the last struggle—the separation of body and soul, yet I would writhe in that struggle to cling to you! Celeste! angel of mercy—have pity—listen to me!”

His voice was drowned in the roar of the riotous waves, and the resounding noise of the thunder.

“We shall be killed!” she impulsively said, but with the resignation of one too exhausted to mind.

But she felt great pity for him, and laying her hand upon his head, leaned towards him. The wind loosened her long hair, and it wrapped itself about his form. At the same moment the clouds burst, the drenching rain fell, and a great wave struck them, and threw them far upon the shore beyond the beach. For some time after the water had receded, neither of them could speak; when Celeste found her voice, she begged pitiously to be taken home, “another moment,” she said, “and we shall be drowned.”

The storm increased in fury. Wentworth pulled himself to his feet, and dragging her by the arm, led her away. They walked with uneven gait, stumbling and clinging to each other, their wet clothes weighing on them and impeding their progress. Their path half lost in the darkness. They guided themselves by the alternating flashes of lightning.

CHAPTER XXIII

“Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister.”

The piazza they had left so illuminated, and occupied by people, was now dark and deserted. Every light which had not been removed for safety, had been demolished by the resistless wind.

Standing on the uppermost step, in her white dress, with the loose sleeves blown back, her small, white arm revealed, they saw Nanette with the lightning playing about her.

“Oh! how thankful I am that you have come! I have been half wild with fear—Mr. Caulfield went to look for you and has not returned; I never thought to see you alive, my darling, my darling,” she cried, over and over, taking Celeste from Carl and leading her up the steps.

“Are you trying to kill her?” she asked, turning upon him sharply.

“I have not killed her,” he answered, mourn-

fully, "let her tell you what she has done to me!" Without a word more he turned and walked away from them.

"The man is mad," Nanette said, as she led Celeste dripping through the spacious halls to their bed-room. On the hearth a wood fire burned and the damp and cold of the night was dispelled. She put Celeste, who was exhausted and without resistance, into a chair, made her drink some brandy, and proceeded to remove her wet garments, and wring the water from her soaking hair.

When she had put on her warm woolen wrapper, and placed a pillow for her head, she knelt down and fell to rubbing her feet, all the while talking to her, and detailing how wretched she had been.

"Were you wild, dear, that you did not see those black clouds, even when you started? Did you not meet everyone hurrying back? Oh! where have you been? I think if you had not come when you did I should have gone crazy. Celeste! why are you what you are, and why do you do such reckless things? Every day you go out so far into the ocean I expect you to be washed to my feet, dead."

She drew her chair nearer the fire. The flames shedding their light on Celeste's face showed how pale and troubled it was. She wearily laid

her head against Nanette, her colorless lips quivering with nervousness. Every now and then as the sound of the waves broke upon the shore she shuddered, and convulsively hid her face between her hands.

“My own little one,” she murmured, in her soft, dreamy voice, “always so true; so often tried, yet ever comforting, how could I live a day without you? Forgive me, forgive me the anxiety and misery I have caused you. But do not even think of me, Nanette,” drawing the girl nearer to her. “Think of him, that poor man—he is so desperate, so forlorn, so miserable and all alone! There is no being to comfort him, no soul to speak to him, he is alone—out there in the storm, you do not know how terrible it is, Nanette, can we not go to him?” springing to her feet.

A sudden burst of thunder made her drop down in the chair, and hide her face in the cushions.

“It would be useless, useless. We should never find him.”

“God have mercy on him! Oh! that I had died years ago—years ago, Nanette.” She clung to the girl terrified—“suppose—suppose——”

“Hush!” Nanette said, holding her close. “Have you not always spoken of his reverence

for God—his submission? He would not do this thing; strength will come to him. You must not suffer so, I cannot bear it. But oh! Celeste, had you listened in the beginning when I begged you to spare him.”

“I could not, Nanette, I could not, you cannot understand.”

The two women sat before the fire till the dry logs burned in two and parted and blackened.

All night the waves dashed against the shore, and in the morning it was found that the sea had swept over the pavilion, and its fragments were washed in every direction, and human beings with white faces upturned to the sun or buried in the sand, were discovered along the beach.

CHAPTER XXIV

"I will arise now and go about the city in the street."

A quiet still night in the city; hot and oppressive to suffocation. On the outskirts of the town, in the center of a small plot of ground, a short thick set man, with an old cap in his hand, is standing. His head is raised to heaven, the moon shining full in his face, shows it white and distorted with passionate yearning and despair.

"My God," he is saying, half audibly, "I went my own way, I found liberty, new life, I lived in a heaven where thou didst not reign, and thou hast left me, without my soul's desire. Thou hast shown me the evil of my way, and laid bare my sin before me. I have had the pall of darkness, and even of death about me; I have reached heaven and have passed through hell, and stand on the other side with blistered feet, and the flames still fanning my back. I have arisen but round about me is a void. Vainly may I study

and watch, all is empty space. That angel face and voice removed to be seen but in sufferance. But shall she, great God, go free?" His tone of gentleness changed to blasphemous outcrying. "Shall she live in her scented atmosphere to make humanity swoon, and lie at her feet a poisoned, helpless mass? Do thou in thy mercy cut short her fiendish work; be her face deprived of its fair proportions; let the light of her eyes be two flames burning beneath her brain; let the odor of her breath be as carrion to her senses; let the blood of her heart be liquid fire; as she has destroyed with human power do thou annihilate with God-like despotism."

The inflection of his voice was higher and higher; suddenly he broke off and looked about him with a startled, hunted expression.

"What am I saying, what am I saying?" he whispered.

"Celeste, Celeste, fair and tender, I would not harm you. Ah! those cool, slender fingers, those golden eyes and burning lips; what am I that you should have sought me? Yet of all the world you alone did. And you said the words that summoned me to life, and you came to me day after day, bearing the censure of your people for my sake. They do say little Nanette is dying, caught cold waiting for you the night of the storm, when I meant to have drowned you,

taken you in my arms and walked through the waters with you into eternity. They will bury her too in violets. It is well. But you, God of love comfort you, comfort you, though for every restful moment, I shall have hours of torment. How could you help but weary of me, dear child, when the music was done? Was it your fault that the happiness which fell from your hands cost more than my love could pay? And yet—and yet—to have found you faithless, and through your faithlessness to be left alone!”

He stretched out his arms at random.

“How can I live and know, day by day, every hour of my life that I shall no more behold you!”

He raised his eyes to heaven.

“If I could but go,” he whispered.

The moon hid herself behind the clouds, the honey-suckle on the cottage porches shed its redolence on the air, the distant tinkling of the car bells faintly broke upon the stillness. The man bowed his head, turned slowly away and sought his couch of skins.

“He is mad,” an old crone said to her daughter, as he passed them on the street, walking rapidly with his arms crossed on his breast his chin resting on them. “He draped all his furniture in mourning and hauled it to the country himself, and set a fire to

it. There was a picture of a beautiful lady in a gold frame, and they say he stamped on it, and then fell down on the ground and prayed over it. I went out this morning with my bags, but there was nothing there but ashes."

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